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G. MIDDLETON

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MIRACULOUS POWER

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Dr. *M I D D L E T O N*'s

**FREE INQUIRY**

INTO THE

**MIRACULOUS POWERS,**

Which are supposed to have subsisted in the

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH, &c.**

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Dec. 12. 1748.

Dr. *Middleton's* Free Inquiry &c. having been printed in such haſt, and at ſuch a ſeaſon of the year, that the ſheets have not had ſufficient time to dry, it is thought proper to give this notice to Gentlemen, not to have their books bound in leſs than two months or they will run the hazard of having them ſpoiled.



A  
**FREE INQUIRY**  
 INTO THE  
**MIRACULOUS POWERS,**

Which are supposed to have subsisted in the

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH,**  
 From the EARLIEST AGES through several suc-  
 cessive CENTURIES.

By which it is shewn,

That we have no sufficient Reason to believe, upon the Authority  
 of the PRIMITIVE FATHERS,

That any such Powers were continued to the CHURCH, after the  
 Days of the APOSTLES.

---

By CONYERS MIDDLETON, D. D.

---

Hæ sunt religiones, quas sibi a Majoribus suis traditas pertinacissime tueri ac defendere  
 perseverant : nec considerant quales sint, sed ex hoc probatas atque veras esse con-  
 fidunt, quod eas Veteres tradiderunt. Tantaque est auctoritas vetustatis, ut inquirere  
 in eam, scelus esse ducatur. Itaque creditur ei passim, tanquam cognitæ veritati.

LACTANT. Div. Inst. l. 2. c. 7.

Τὰς κατὰ ἀλήθειαν εὐσεβεῖς καὶ φιλοσόφους, μόνου τ' ἀληθὲς τιμᾶν καὶ εὐργεῖν, ὁ λόγος  
 ὑπαγορεύει, παραίτημένους δόξαις παλαιῶν ἐξακολουθεῖν, ἐν φαῦλαι ὥσιν.

JUSTIN MART. Apol. 1.

Num fingo? num mentior? cupio refelli. Quid enim laboro, nisi ut veritas in omni  
 quæstione illustretur.

CIC. Tusc. Quæst. 3. 20.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for R. MANBY and H. S. Cox, on *Ludgate-Hill*.

M.DCC.XLIX.





THE HISTORY OF THE  
NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES  
FROM THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
TO THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES  
IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
BY  
THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES  
OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
1975

# P R Æ F A C E.

**W**HEN I first sent abroad my *Introductory Discourse*, this larger work, which I then promised, and now offer to the public, was actually prepared, and intended to have been published at the same time and in the same form, in which it now appears, with that Discourse prefixed to it. But when I recollected the great importance of the subject, which had never before been professedly examined ; and that the part especially, which I had undertaken to defend, was not onely new, but contradictory to the general opinion, which prevails among Christians ; and above all, that I had nothing to trust to in the management of it, but my own private judgment ; I began to think it a duty, which candor and prudence prescribed, not to alarm the public at once with an argument so strange and so little understood ; nor to hazard an experiment so big with consequences, till I had first given out some sketch or general plan of what I was projecting ; so that all, who were disposed to examine it, might have notice and leisure, to inquire  
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into the grounds of it, and qualify themselves to form a proper judgement of that evidence, which I might afterwards produce in its defence. I was in hopes also, by this method, of reaping some benefit to myself, from the opportunity, which it would give, not onely of drawing out other people's sentiments, but, if any just cause should be offered, of changing even my own ; while I kept it still in my power, either to drop the pursuit of my scheme, or to reform it, in such a manner, as any new light or better information might happen to direct me.

This was my view, in publishing a separate edition of the *Introductory Discourse* : which, as I easily foresaw, was sure to encounter all the opposition, that prejudice, bigotry, and superstition are ever prepared to give to all free inquiries into opinions, which depend on the prevalence of their power. I was aware, that the very novelty of it would offend, and the matter of it still more : that many would rise up against it, and some of them by writing, others, by noise and clamor, try to raise a popular odium upon it ; but my comfort was, that this would excite the candid inquirers also, to take it into their consideration, and to weigh the merit



and consequences of it ; and it was the judgment of these alone, by which I proposed to determine my future measures and resolution with regard to it.

The event has answered, not onely to my expectation, but to my wishes : for notwithstanding all, which has been published against it, from the Press, the Pulpit, and the Theological Schools, the general approbation, which it has every where received from those, whose authority I chiefly value, has given me the utmost encouragement to persevere in the prosecution of my argument, as being of the greatest importance to the Protestant religion, and the sole expedient, which can effectually secure it, from being gradually undermined, and finally subverted by the efforts of *Rome*.

But besides the favorable reception, which it has met with both among the Clergy and the Layety, it was an unexpected satisfaction to me, to be informed lately by a friend, that Mr. *Lock* had many years ago declared the same opinion with mine, concerning *the miracles of the Primitive Church*, in a paragraph of his *third Letter on Toleration* ; which I had never read or seen, but shall now offer to the

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reader



reader in his own words ; being persuaded, that the authority of so eminent a writer, and so singularly qualified by his talents and studies, to discern the exact relations and consequences of things, will add great weight and confirmation to the cause, which I am here defending.

“ And so I leave you, says Mr. *Lock* to his Antagonist, “ to dispose of the credit of Ecclesiastical  
 “ writers, as you shall think fit, and by your authority, to establish or invalidate theirs, as you  
 “ please. But this, I think, is evident, that he,  
 “ who will build his faith or reasonings upon miracles delivered by Church-Historians, *will find*  
 “ *cause to go no farther than the Apostles time, or*  
 “ *else, not to stop at Constantin’s* : since the writers  
 “ after that period, whose word we take, as unquestionable in other things, speak of miracles in  
 “ their time with no less assurance, than the Fathers before the fourth century : and a great part  
 “ of the miracles of the second and third centuries stand upon the credit of the writers of the fourth.  
 “ So that, that sort of argument, which takes and  
 “ rejects the testimony of the ancients at pleasure,  
 “ as it may best suit with it, will not have much  
 “ force



“ force with those, who are not disposed to embrace the hypothesis, without any arguments at all [1].”

As to the writers, who have hitherto declared themselves against this opinion, signified here in short by Mr. *Lock*, and explained at large by myself, they have shewn a great eagerness indeed, to distinguish their zeal, but a very little knowledge of the question, which they have undertaken to discuss; urged by the hopes of those honors, which they have seen others acquire, by former attacks upon me; and, like true soldiers of the militant Church, prepared to fight for every establishment, that offers such pay and rewards to its defenders. Who, from a blind deference to authority, think the credibility of a witness sufficient, to evince the certainty of all facts indifferently, whether natural or supernatural, probable or improbable; and knowing no distinction between faith and credulity, take a facility of believing, to be the surest mark of a sound Christian. Their arguments are conformable to their principles: for instead of entering into the merits of the cause, and shewing my opinion to be false or

[1] See Lett. 3d on Tolerat. c. x. p. 269.



contradictory to any truth subsisting in the world, they think it a full confutation of it, to prove it contrary to the belief of the primitive ages, to the testimony of the ancient Fathers, and to the tradition of the Catholic Church : by the help of which venerable names, they insinuate fears and jealousies, of I know not what consequences, dangerous to Christianity, ruinous to the faith of History, and introductive of an universal Scepticism. Terrors purely imaginary ; grounded on error and prejudice ; which if suffered to prevail, would produce consequences much more to be dreaded ; subversive of all true religion, as well as of every thing else, that is rational and virtuous among men. But after all their invectives, it is a pleasure to find them obliged, in the course of the debate, to confute their own clamors ; and to declare at last with me, that, whatever be the fate of my argument, or were it allowed even to be true, the credit of the Gospel-miracles could not in any degree be shaken by it [ 1 ].

But to speak my mind freely on the subject of consequences. I am not so scrupulous perhaps in my regard to them, as many of my profession are apt to

[ 1 ] See Remarks on two Pamphlets against the Introd. Disc. p. 8, 9.



be : my nature is frank and open, and warmly disposed, not onely to seek, but to speak what I take to be true : which disposition has been greatly confirmed by the situation, into which Providence has thrown me. For I was never trained to pace in the trammels of the Church, nor tempted by the sweets of it's preferments, to sacrifice the philosophic freedom of a studious, to the servile restraints of an ambitious life : and from this very circumstance, as often as I reflect upon it, I feel that comfort in my own breast, which no external honors can bestow. I persuade myself, that the life and faculties of man, at the best but short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally or laudably, than in the search of knowledge ; and especially of that sort, which relates to our duty, and conduces to our happiness. In these Inquiries therefore, wherever I perceive any glimmering of truth before me ; I readily pursue, and endeavour to trace it to it's source ; without any reserve or caution of pushing the discovery too far, or opening too great a glare of it to the public. I look upon the discovery of any thing which is true, as a valuable acquisition to society ; which cannot possibly hurt, or obstruct the good effect



fect of any other truth whatsoever : for they all partake of one common essence, and necessarily coincide with each other ; and like the drops of rain, which fall separately into the river, mix themselves at once with the stream, and strengthen the general current.

The light of truth indeed is sure to expose the vanity of all those popular systems and prejudices, which are to be found in every country ; derived originally from error, fraud, or superstition ; and craftily imposed upon the many, to serve the interests of a few. Hence it is, that upon the detection of any of these, and especially of the religious kind, we see all that rage of fierce Bigots, hypocritical Zealots, and interested Politicians ; and of all, whose credit or fortunes in any manner depend on the establishment of error and ignorance among men : and hence, all those horrible massacres and persecutions, of which we frequently read, both in Pagan and Christian Countries, which, under the pretext of serving God, have destroyed so many thousands of his best servants. But truth was never known to be on the persecuting side, or to have had any other effect, than to promote the general good, and to co-operate with



Heaven itself, in bringing us still nearer to the perfection of our being, and to the knowledge of that eternal rule of good and ill, which God originally marked out and prescribed to the nature of man. Let the consequences then of truth reach as far as they can ; the farther they reach the better : the more errors they will detect, and the more they will dissipate of those clouds and mists, in which the crafty and interested part of mankind are apt to involve and disguise the real nature of things, from the view of their fellow creatures.

The present quæstion, concerning the reality of the miraculous powers of the primitive Church, depends on the joint credibility of the facts, pretended to have been produced by those powers, and of the witnesses, who attest them. If either part be infirm, their credit must sink in proportion ; and if the facts especially be incredible, must of course fall to the ground : because no force of testimony can alter the nature of things. The credibility of facts lies open to the trial of our reason and senses, but the credibility of witnesses depends on a variety of principles, wholly concealed from us ; and tho', in many cases, it may reasonably be presumed, yet in none,  
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can it certainly be known. For it is common with men, out of crafty and selfish views, to dissemble and deceive ; or, out of weakness and credulity, to embrace and defend with zeal, what the craft of others had imposed upon them : but plain facts cannot delude us ; cannot speak any other language, or give any other information, but what flows from nature and truth. The testimony therefore of facts, as it is offered to our senses, in this wonderfull fabric and constitution of worldly things, may properly be called the testimony of God himself ; as it carries with it the surest instruction in all cases, and to all nations, which in the ordinary course of his providence, he has thought fit to appoint for the guidance of human life.

But before we procede, to examine the particular facts and testimonies, which antiquity has furnished for the decision of this dispute, our first care should be, to inform ourselves of the proper nature and condition of those miraculous powers, which are the subject of it, as they are represented to us in the history of the Gospel : for till we have learnt from those sacred records, what they really were, for what purposes granted, and in what manner exerted by  
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the Apostles and first possessors of them, we cannot form a proper judgement on those evidences, which are brought either to confirm or confute their continuance in the Church, and must dispute consequently at random, as chance or prejudice may prompt us, about things unknown to us.

And this indeed appears to be the case of all these zealous Champions, who have attempted to refute the *Introductory Discourse*. Among whom, I have not observed one, who seems to have spent a thought, in considering the origin and use of those powers, as they are set forth in the New Testament. They appeal indeed to the Texts, in which they were promised by our Lord to his disciples : where tho' there is not the least hint of any particular time, for which they were to last, yet this they supply from their own imagination, and by the help of a postulatum, which all people will grant, *that they continued as long, as they were necessary to the Church*, they presently extend that necessity to what length they please, or as far as they find it agreeable to the several systems, which they had previously entertained about them.



They urge especially that passage from St. *Mark*, in which our Lord, just ready to ascend into Heaven, and giving his last instructions to his Apostles, *to go and preach to all nations*, immediately adds; *And these signs shall follow them who believe : in my name they shall cast out Devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover* [1].

From these words, one of my Antagonists argues thus : “ It will here be observed, that this promise  
 “ was not made to the Apostles personally, but to  
 “ them, that should believe through their preach-  
 “ ing, without any limitation of time for the con-  
 “ tinuance of these powers to their days. And  
 “ when it is considered how great a part of the  
 “ Heathen world remained unconverted after their  
 “ days, it is no unreasonable supposition, that these  
 “ powers did not expire with the Apostles, but were  
 “ continued to their Successors, in the work of pro-  
 “ pagating the Gospel. How long, I say not : and  
 “ perhaps there is not light enough in history, to  
 “ settle this point ; as indeed it nothing concerns

[1] Mark xvi. 17.



“ us. But the earliest Fathers unanimously affirm,  
 “ that these powers subsisted in the Church in their  
 “ days ; and why they are not to be believed, it  
 “ is the Author’s business to shew [ 1 ].

Another Advocate of the same cause makes the following remark on the same passage : “ Our Saviour, before he left the world, promises these  
 “ miraculous powers not onely to the Apostles, but to  
 “ private Christians : and the rules and directions,  
 “ which St. *Paul* afterwards gave the *Corinthians*,  
 “ concerning the exercise of them, plainly shew,  
 “ that they must have continued some considerable  
 “ time in the Church. And as Christ’s promise is  
 “ without any limitation of time, we may reasonably suppose, that they lasted as long as the Church  
 “ had an immediate occasion for them, such as the  
 “ farther conversion of the world.” — For which purpose of converting those nations, who had not as yet heard of the Gospel, he declares it, “ to be necessary, that the Successors of the Apostles should be  
 “ indued with miraculous powers, especially with  
 “ *the gift of tongues*, without which they could  
 “ not expect, any considerable success — and he

[ 1 ] See Observat. on the Introd. Disc. p. 25.



“ concludes therefore, that it is highly probable, if  
 “ not absolutely certain, that they did actually sub-  
 “ sist in the Church for some considerable time, af-  
 “ ter the days of the Apostles [1].”

It being agreed then, that in the original promise of these miraculous gifts, there is no intimation of any particular period, to which their continuance was limited, the next quæstion is, by what sort of evidence the precise time of their duration is to be determined? But to this point one of the writers just referred to, excuses himself, as we have seen, from giving any answer; and thinks it sufficient to declare in general, that *the earliest Fathers unanimously affirm them to have continued down to their times.* Yet he has not told us, as he ought to have done, to what age he limits the character of *the earliest Fathers*; whether to the second or to the third century, or, with the generality of our writers, means also to include the 4th. But to whatever age he may restrain it, the difficulty at last will be, to assign a reason, why we must needs stop there. In the mean while, by his appealing thus to the *earliest*

[1] See Postscript of a Treatise on Mirac. by Abr. Lemoine. p. 511, 512, 515.



*Fathers* onely, as unanimous on this article, a common reader would be apt to infer, that the later Fathers are more cold or diffident, or divided upon it; whereas the reverse of this is true, and the more we descend from those earliest Fathers, the more strong and explicit we find their Successors, in attesting the perpetual succession and daily exertion of the same miraculous powers, in their several ages: so that if the cause must be determined by *the unanimous consent of Fathers*, we shall find as much reason to believe, that those powers were continued even to the latest ages, as to any other, how early and primitive soever, after the days of the Apostles.

But the same writer gives us two reasons, why he does not chuse to say any thing upon the subject of their duration: 1<sup>st</sup>, because, *there is not light enough in history, to settle it*: 2<sup>dly</sup>, because, *the thing itself is of no concern to us*.

As to his first reason, I am at a loss to conceive, what farther light a professed Advocate of the primitive ages and Fathers can possibly require in this case. For as far as the Church-Historians can illustrate or throw light upon any thing, there is not a single point in all history, so constantly, explicitly



and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of these powers through all ages, from the earliest Father, who first mentions them, down to the time of the Reformation. Which same succession is still farther deduced, by persons of the most eminent character, for their probity, learning, and dignity in the *Romish* Church, to this very day. So that the onely doubt, which can remain with us, is ; whether the Church-Historians are to be trusted or not : for if any credit be due to them in the present case, it must reach either to all, or to none : because the reason of believing them in any one age, will be found to be of equal force in all, as far as it depends on the characters of the persons attesting, or the nature of the things attested.

The second reason is still more curious ; *that the point of their duration is of no concern to us.* This indeed is strange, from a writer of his principles ; for if primitive antiquity, as all these champions contend, is to be the rule, of regulating the doctrines and discipline of all modern Churches, it must surely be of the utmost concern to us to know, how far it's authority may be trusted, and how far the  
hand



hand of God continued to co-operate visibly with the saints of those ages, by giving a divine sanction to the doctrines, which they taught, and the rites, which they established. For that God did actually exert himself in such an extraordinary manner, in those primitive days, this writer affirms from the unanimous testimony of *the earliest Fathers*; yet owns withal, that the same ages were imposed upon also by false and fictitious pretensions to miraculous powers. As far therefore, as it is our duty, to conform ourselves to the doctrines and usages of those early ages, so far it must be of great importance, to have a rule of distinguishing the true from the false; of discerning those, which God had stamped with his authority for the common good of mankind, from those, which fraud and craft had imposed, for the private interest of a few Impostors: towards which, nothing could afford more light and help to us, than to know the precise duration of true miracles, and to be able to pronounce, that they proceeded thus far and no farther. On my part indeed, it might very consistently be said, that it is of no use to inquire or dispute how long those powers subsisted, since, according to my principles, they never subsisted at all,



after the days of the Apostles : but when a writer affirms the Primitive Church to be a guide to us, and to have been indued with miraculous powers, for the confirmation of it's divine authority, yet declares it of *no concern to us*, to know, how long those powers continued in it, or at what time God was pleased to withdraw them, on account of the prevailing corruptions and forgeries of the same Church, he acts not onely in contradiction to his own principles, but to reason and common sense, and betrays a great want either of judgement or sincerity.

The argument also, which these writers alledge for the continuance of miracles, and especially of *the gift of tongues, from the unconverted state of the Heathen world*, is not less impertinent and injudicious : because it might have been alledged as justly and with equal force, through all ages of the Church, from the Apostolic times down to our own ; and will justify the Romanists themselves in their pretensions to the same powers at this very day : since the greatest part of this habitable Globe remains still in the same *unconverted state* ; immersed in gross idolatry ; without any knowledge of the true God, or light of the Gospel among them.

But



But in truth, this same consideration, *of the unconverted state of the Heathens*, was thought to have so much weight in it by *Grotius*, as to persuade him from a parity, both of reason, and of evidence also, which was found in every age, that these extraordinary gifts were certainly continued to the later, as well as to the earlier times of the Church. Nay, he took the conversion of the Heathens, to be an occasion so worthy of the divine interposition, as not to doubt, he says, but, that *if any person were employed in it at this day, in a manner agreeable to the will of our Lord, he would find himself indued with a power of working miracles* [1]. From which declaration, of so learned and judicious a Critic, we may observe in the first place, what I have elsewhere frequently signified; how naturally the allowance of those powers to the earlier ages, will engage us, if we are consistent with ourselves, to allow the same also to the later ages: and, in the second place, how fallacious the judgement even of the wisest will ever

[1] Cum vero multo etiam seriora secula plena sint testimoniis ejus rei, nescio qua ratione moti quidam id donum ad prima tantum tempora restringant. — Quare si quis nunc etiam Gentibus Christi ignaris — Christum, ita ut ipse annunciari voluit, annunciet, promissionis vim duraturam non dubito. In Mare. xvi. 17.



be found, when deserting the path of nature and experience, and giving the reins to fancy and conjecture, they attempt to illustrate the secret counsils of Providence.

For experience has long taught us, that tho' all the different Churches and Sects of Christians, have sent abroad their several Missionaries, to propagate the Gospel among the remote and Idolatrous nations, yet none of them have ever been inabled to work a single miracle in confirmation of their mission. The Romanists indeed make a pretension to such a power, and boast of several miracles performed by their Missionaries in both the *Indies*: yet, as I have elsewhere observed, one of their gravest writers has openly acknowledged the vanity of such pretensions; and one of their most eminent wonder-workers, St. *Francis Xavier*, called the *Apostle of the Indies*, laments in some of his letters, “ that through his ignorance  
“ of the language of those nations: he found himself  
“ incapable of doing any service to the Christian  
“ cause, and was but little better than a mute  
“ Statue among them, till he could acquire some  
“ competent knowledge of it: for which purpose,  
“ he was forced to act the boy again, and apply  
“ him-



“ himself to the task of learning the rudiments  
“ of it [1].”

Now this *gift of tongues* is what the adversaries of my scheme lay the greatest stress upon. They declare it to be so peculiarly necessary to the propagation of the Gospel, that no considerable success could be expected without it ; and from this necessity infer the certainty of its continuance after the days of the Apostles. But they will have the mortification to find, in the sequel of this work, their imaginary hypothesis effectually confuted by the evidence of real fact ; and this very gift, of whose continuance they are so assured, to have been of all others, the most evidently and confessedly withdrawn, in the earliest ages of the Church. They will find, I say, that the single Father, who lays any claim to it, and one of the gravest and most venerable of them all, laments, like the *Romish Apostle of the Indies*, his own want of it, in the work of propagating the Gospel among a rude and barbarous people : and that, in all the succeeding ages, while all the other kinds of miraculous gifts are frequently celebrated, and affirmed to flourish

[1] See Prefat. Disc. to my Letter from Rome, p. 99.



still in great abundance, there is not a single instance to be met with of this, nor the least pretension made to it by any writer whatsoever.

From this fact, and many more of the same sort, which might be produced, the reader will observe, how rash and presumptuous it is, to form arguments so peremptorily upon the supposed necessity or propriety of a divine interposition, in this or that particular case ; and to decide upon the views and motives of the Deity, by the narrow conceptions of human reason. Whereas the whole, which the wit of man can possibly discover, either of the ways or will of the Creator, must be acquired by a contrary method ; not by imagining vainly within ourselves, what may be proper or improper for him to do ; but by looking abroad, and contemplating, what he has actually done ; and attending seriously to that revelation, which he made of himself from the beginning, and placed continually before our eyes, in the wonderfull works, and beautifull fabric of this visible world.

There is another mistake, which is common to all these Advocates of the primitive miracles, and the chief source of their prejudices against *the Introductory*



*troductory Discourse* ; in taking it for granted, as they all do, that these miraculous powers, when they had once been conferred by our Lord, upon any of his Disciples, were ever after perpetually inherent in them, and ready to be exerted at their will and pleasure : whereas it is evident, from several instances, both of the collation and exercise of them, which we find in the New Testament, that they were merely temporary and occasional ; adapted to particular exigencies, thought worthy of them by our Lord ; and imparted onely at the moment of their exertion, which, by some special impulse, was notified at the same time to the agent ; and as soon as those particular occasions were served, that they were withdrawn again or suspended, and the Agents reduced to the condition of all other men, and left to the guidance of their own natural prudence.

This, I say, is evident, from the account of these gifts and the effects of them, which is given to us in the Gospel ; as it has been observed also and declared by some of the best Expositors. Thus *Grotius*, in his comment on our Lord's promise of them to all true believers, remarks ; *that these wonderfull faculties were severally distributed to each faithful Disciple, yet not*  
I so,



*so, as to be exerted of themselves, or at pleasure, but reserved to special occasions* [1]. And the same thing is signified by our Lord himself, in his first promise of them to his Apostles, when he sent them out, *two by two, to preach his Gospel to the Jews* : on which occasion he tells them, *that when they were brought before Governors and Kings, they should not take any thought, about what they were to say for themselves, for it would be given to them, in that very hour, what they should speak* [2]. And that it was not peculiar to the gift of language or tongues only, to be given at the moment of it's exertion, but common likewise to all the rest, will be shewn probably, on some other occasion, more at large in a particular treatise, which is already prepared by me, on that subject.

As this then was the state of those extraordinary powers, with which our Lord thought fit, to arm his Apostles, against the first struggles and difficulties of their mission ; so in his more intimate conversations with them, we find him frequently inculcating,

[1] Non omnibus omnia — ita tamen cuilibet, ut oportet, credenti aliqua tunc data sit admirabilis facultas, quæ se non semper quidem, sed data occasione explicaret. In Mar. xvi. 17.

[2] Mar. x. 19.



as an essential qualification also for the same mission, the practice of all those moral virtues, which are peculiarly adapted to conciliate the favor and good will of men: a general benevolence, modesty, affability, gentleness of behaviour, with great circumspection and caution of giving offence. *Behold*, says he, *I send ye forth as sheep, in the midst of wolves: be ye wise therefore as serpents, and harmless as doves* [1]: as if he meant to admonish them, that they were not to be perpetually directed by divine impulses and inspirations, but left on many occasions to the ordinary direction of their own natural faculties: and that their success would depend as much on the purity of their lives, as the force of their wonderfull works: and that the miraculous gifts, which were indulged to them, in this infancy of the Gospel, were intended to draw people's attention more strongly to the contemplation of their manners; and to make them reflect on the excellency of that doctrine, which produced such rare fruits, and offered such examples of innocence and sanctity, for the correction of a depraved and finfull world.

[1] Matt. x. 16.



The writers however, of whom I am speaking, prepossessed with the notion of the perpetual inherence of those powers, in all, who had once been indued with them, harangue with great gayety on the folly, which they impute to me, of imagining, that they should all be extinguished in a moment, upon the death of the last of the Apostles. They observe, that St. *John* outlived all the rest near forty years; and that some of the most eminent and gifted of the other disciples, who are mentioned in the Gospel, survived him also, and were employing themselves, in different parts of the earth, in propagating the Gospel, and working perpetual miracles for the conversion of Unbelievers; and it was incredible, that these powers, which they were exerting every hour, with such success and honor to the Christian cause, in all the principal Cities and countries of the world, and at so wide a distance from each other, should all fail them at once, and expire at that very instant, in which St. *John* happened to die at *Ephesus*.

But while they fancy themselves, to be displaying the force of their reasoning and eloquence, they are but exposing their own ignorance, not onely of  
I the



the nature of those extraordinary powers, which are the ground of the dispute, but of the particular quæstion, against which they are disputing. For it is no where affirmed in the *Introductory Discourse*, as their way of arguing implies, that those powers either vanished instantaneously, upon the death of St. *John*; or subsisted even so long, as St. *John* remained alive: but the single point in dispute, as far as it arises from that Discourse, is, whether we have sufficient ground to believe, upon the testimony of the ancient Fathers, that they subsisted at all, after the days of the Apostles.

If the nature then of these powers be such, as I have signified above, and shall endeavour hereafter to demonstrate; and if what I am now disputing with regard to the same powers, should appear also to be true; some perhaps may be apt to demand, what it is, that we are to judge at last, concerning their real duration; and to what period we may reasonably venture to restrain them. And tho' such a demand be rather curious than pertinent, and the solution of it of no consequence to the point in debate; yet as we cannot help forming some opinion or other on all subjects, which have fallen



under our particular observation, so I shall not scruple to declare in this, what I take to be the most probable, as far as I have been able to collect it, from the facts and instances relating to it, which are to be found in the New Testament: but I propose it onely as a conjecture, which may excite others also, to search, and to guess for themselves, till they can hit upon something more satisfactory. In the mean while, my opinion in short is this; that in those first efforts of planting the Gospel, after our Lord's ascension, the extraordinary gifts, which he had promised, were poured out in the fullest measure on the Apostles, and those other Disciples, whom he had ordained to be the primary Instruments of that great work; in order to enable them, more easily to overrule the inveterate prejudices both of the Jews and Gentiles, and to bear up against the discouraging shocks of popular rage and persecution, which they were taught to expect, in this noviciate of their ministry. But in process of time, when they had laid a foundation, sufficient to sustain the great fabrick designed to be erected upon it, and, by an invincible courage, had conquered the first and principal difficulties; and  
planted



planted Churches in all the chief Cities of the *Roman* Empire, and settled a regular ministry to succede them, in the government of the same ; it may reasonably be presumed, that as the benefit of miraculous powers began to be less and less wanted, in proportion to the increase of those Churches, so the use and exercise of them began gradually to decline ; and as soon as Christianity had gained an establishment in every quarter of the known world, that they were finally withdrawn, and the Gospel left to make the rest of it's way, by it's own genuine strength, and the natural force of those divine graces, with which it was so richly stored, *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* : graces ! which never fail to inspire all, who truly possess them, with a zeal and courage, which no terrors can daunt, nor worldly powers subdue. And all this, as far as I am able to judge, from the nature of the gifts themselves, and from the instances or effects of them, which I have any where observed, may probably be thought to have happened, while some of the Apostles were still living : who, in the times even of the Gospel, appear, on several occasions, to have been destitute of any extraordinary gifts :



gifts : and of whose miracles, when we go beyond the limits of the Gospel, we meet with nothing in the later histories, on which we can depend, or nothing rather, but what is apparently fabulous. And as to St. *John* in particular, who survived all the rest, the whole, that is delivered of him with any probability, is, “ that he spent the last years of his life  
 “ in writing his Gospel and Revelations, and in vi-  
 “ siting and confirming all those Churches of *Asia*,  
 “ which had been planted by himself and his bre-  
 “ thren, and were allotted to him, as his peculiar  
 “ province [1].” But in the miraculous kind, the principal story related of him, is, *that being thrown, by the command of Domitian, into a caldron of boiling oil, he came out safe and unhurt from it* : in memory of which, a chappel was afterwards built, and is still remaining, at *the Latine Gate of Old Rome* ; the spot, where the fact is supposed to have happened ; in which I saw the story of it represented in painting. Yet this, with a few other trifling tales, which are recorded of the same Apostle,

[1] Vid. Testimonia de Johanne, præfixa Evangelio ejus a Millio, in Editione N. T.



may justly be considered, as the fiction of the later ages.

But to return once more to the subject of the following sheets. The reader will find in them none of those arts, which are commonly employed by disputants, either to perplex a good cause, or to palliate a bad one; no subtil refinements, forced constructions, or evasive distinctions; but plain reasoning grounded on plain facts, and published with an honest and disinterested view, to free the minds of men from an inveterate imposture, which, through a long succession of ages, has disgraced the religion of the Gospel, and tyrannized over the reason and senses of the Christian world. In the pursuit of which end, I have shewn, by many indisputable facts, that the ancient Fathers, by whose authority that delusion was originally imposed, and has ever since been supported, were extremely credulous and superstitious; possessed with strong prejudices and an enthusiastic zeal, in favor, not onely of Christianity in general, but of every particular doctrine, which a wild imagination could ingraft upon it; and scrupling no art or means, by which they might propagate the  
same



same principles. In short; that they were of a character, from which nothing could be expected, that was candid and impartial; nothing, but what a weak or crafty understanding could supply, towards confirming those prejudices, with which they happened to be possessed; especially where religion was the subject, which above all other motives, strengthens every bias, and inflames every passion of the human mind. And that this was actually the case, I have shewn also by many instances; in which we find them roundly affirming as true, things evidently false and fictitious; in order to strengthen, as they fancied, the evidences of the Gospel; or to serve a present turn of confuting an adversary; or of enforcing a particular point, which they were laboring to establish.

The chief instrument, by which they acquired and maintained their credit in the world, was an appeal to *a divine and miraculous power*, as residing continually among them, and giving testimony to the truth of what they taught and practised. This is the particular quæstion, which I have undertaken here to examine: and, I persuade myself, that, as far as a negative can be demonstrated, I have proved



all their appeals and positive attestations to be unworthy of any credit; mere words unsupported by facts; and in many cases directly confuted by opposite facts and testimonies. For example; among the miraculous gifts, which are expressly claimed by the Fathers, we find these three; *the gift of raising the dead; of speaking with tongues; of understanding the holy Scriptures.* Now, with regard to the two first, the most signal and important of all gifts, after weighing all the circumstances relating to them, and all that antiquity has delivered concerning them, I find the strongest reason to be convinced, that there never was a genuin instance of either of them, in any age, after the days of the Apostles: which I collect, not onely from the improbability of the things themselves, as they are affirmed by the Fathers, but from facts also, which evince the contrary. And as to the third gift; it is allowed and frankly confessed by all, as well friends as enemies; that instead of a divine and infallible interpretation of the Scriptures, a most absurd and ridiculous method of interpreting them, was the very characteristic even of the earliest ages.



If any one therefore should be disposed to answer or confute, what I have affirmed in this book, he must take a different method, from what my Antagonists have hitherto pursued; must not expect, to bear down facts with systems; and from the supposed integrity and piety of the Fathers, to infer the certainty of what they attest: but must refer us to instances, which tally with their testimonies, and experimentally prove the truth of them. When any of the Fathers tell us then, *that many were raised from the dead in their days, in every place where there was a Christian Church, and lived afterwards several years among them; and that others were heard to speak in all kinds of languages:* these Answerers must shew, how those testimonies were verified by facts; and what particular persons were so raised, and indued with languages; or must alledge at least some special effects of those miracles, credibly reported by the ancient writers, either Heathens or Christians. Again, when any of them declare, *that they were enlightened by the grace of God, with the gift of understanding the Scriptures:* it must be shewn, that those specimens,  
which

which they have given, as the fruit and proof of that gift, will justify such a pretension, and may reasonably pass for divinely inspired. This I say, is the onely way of answering, which can satisfy men of sense; and what alone can in any manner affect or invalidate the force of my argument.

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T H R

## Introductory Discourse

**I**T is an ancient and common saying, that the world is full of fools. And it is true, if we consider the multitude of those who are ignorant of the ways of God, and the principles of religion. But it is not less true, that there are many wise men, who are acquainted with the true way of salvation. And it is our duty to seek after them, and to be instructed by them. For the Lord has promised, that he will send wisdom from above, and that he will give us understanding, that we may know his will, and that we may do it. And it is our duty to be diligent in the study of his word, and to be careful to keep his commandments. For the Lord has said, that he will be faithful to those who are faithful to him, and that he will be merciful to those who are merciful to him. And it is our duty to be diligent in the study of his word, and to be careful to keep his commandments. For the Lord has said, that he will be faithful to those who are faithful to him, and that he will be merciful to those who are merciful to him.

## T H E

## Introductory Discourse.

**I**T is an opinion commonly received among Christians, and above all, among those of the *Romish* communion, that after the days of the Apostles, there resided still in the Primitive Church, through several successive ages, a divine and extraordinary power of working miracles, which was frequently and openly exerted, in confirmation of the truth of the Gospel, and for the conviction of unbelievers. This is generally alledged by the Divines of all Churches, in their disputes with the Sceptics, as a subsidiary proof of the Divinity of the Christian Doctrine ; and as it is managed by the Church of *Rome*, is rendered more persuasive and affecting to the multitude, than what the Gospel itself affords, by deducing the succession of those apostolical gifts down to our own times, and offering



offering the testimony of the same miracles to the senses even of the present Age.

This then being universally adopted by the Papists, as an indisputable fact, or an article rather of the Christian Faith; and espoused likewise in part by the Protestants, as subservient in some degree to the Christian cause, I thought it my duty to inquire into the grounds of it. For as it is the part of every Christian, to inform himself, as far as he is able, of every thing, which his religion requires him, either to believe or to practise, so it is more especially of those, whom Providence has blessed with a capacity, and leisure, and the opportunities of inquiring; nor yet merely for their own information, but for the instruction likewise of others, who want the same advantages.

It was this, which gave rise to the present inquiry, and what induced me also, to publish the result of it. I was not led to the one, by an idle curiosity; nor to the other, by the vanity of combating established opinions, but the duty of declaring my own: which, by the most impartial judgement, that I am able to form, I take not onely to be true, but useful also, and even necessary:  
to

to the defence of Christianity, as it is generally received, and ought always to be defended, in Protestant Churches.

But if the facts and testimonies, which obliged me to embrace it, should not have the same force, nor suggest the same reflections to others, I shall neither be surprized, nor concerned at it: for it is every man's right to judge for himself; and a difference of opinion is as natural to us, as a difference of taste: and when the sensual faculties are perpetually passing different judgements on the same objects in different men, it cannot be thought strange, that the intellectual, in which nature seems to have formed a greater disparity, should act with the same variety. But if to the principles implanted in our nature, we add that peculiar biases, which every individual receives from education, example, or habit; and consider what strong prejudices, a zeal for opinions once imbibed, or an interest especially accruing from them, is apt to instill even into the better sort, we should have cause rather to wonder, that any number of men should ever be of one mind, in any question of difficulty or importance. Hence contrary doctrines in religion  
are



are frequently deduced from the same texts, and contrary systems of politics, from the same monuments.

Whatever judgement therefore any other man may form, or whatever he may write, on the subject of this performance, I shall not easily be drawn into any controversy with him about it; but contenting myself with the discharge of my own conscience, by this free declaration of my real sentiments, and indulging the same liberty to every body else, shall leave the rest to the judgement of the public. I do not mean however, by this profession, to preclude myself so intirely from all farther concern with the present argument, as not to be ready on all occasions, to acknowledge any mistake, of which I may be convinced, in the representation of any fact, or testimony, or character, which I have applied to the support of it, and to retract it, in the same public manner, in which I committed it.

But besides that general obligation, which is common to me with all other Christians, of searching into the origin and evidences of our religion, I found myself particularly excited to this task, by what I had occasionally observed and heard, of the



late growth of Popery in this Kingdom, and the great number of Popish books, which have been printed and dispersed amongst us, within these few years: in which their writers make much use of that prejudice, in favor of *primitive antiquity*, which prevails even in this Protestant Country, towards drawing weak people into their cause, and shewing their worship to be the best, because it is the most conformable to that ancient pattern. But the most powerful of all their arguments, and what gains them the most proselytes, is, their confident attestation of miracles, as subsisting still in their Church, and the clear succession of them, which they deduce through all history, from the Apostolic times, down to our own. This their Apologists never fail to display, with all the force of their rhetoric; and with good reason; since it is a proof, of all others, the most striking to vulgar minds, and the most decisive indeed to all minds, as far as it is believed to be true.

Thus one of their principal Champions, with whom I have been engaged, demonstrates the orthodoxy of their faith, and their true descent from that Church, to which our Lord has promised his



prefence to the end of the world. For speaking of  
 the miracles of the Pagans, which I had opposed to  
 those of the Papists, he says; “ God has been pleas-  
 “ ed in every age, to work far more evident miracles  
 “ in his Church, by the ministry of his Saints; in  
 “ raising the dead to life; in curing the blind and  
 “ the lame; in casting out Devils; in healing in a  
 “ moment inveterate diseases, and the like stupen-  
 “ dous works of his power; attested by the most  
 “ authentic monuments; and very frequently, as  
 “ may be seen in the acts of the canonization of  
 “ Saints, by the depositions of innumerable eye-wit-  
 “ nesses, examined upon oath; and by the public  
 “ notoriety of the facts: which kind of miracles, so  
 “ authentically attested, will be to all ages a standing  
 “ evidence, that the Church, in whose Communion  
 “ they have all been wrought, is not that idolatrous,  
 “ pagan Church, which the Doctor pretends, but  
 “ the true spouse of Christ.” [a] And in a second  
 piece,

[a] See *Catholic Christian*. Pref. xviii.

N. B. I have been well informed, that among the desertors from  
 the *English* army in *Flanders*, who were taken in the time of the late  
 rebellion and shot to death in *London*, there was one, who professed  
 to die in the *Romish* Communion, and being asked by the Clergyman,  
 who



piece, which the same writer has since published, he promises to give us an *history of the Christian miracles* in a particular treatise, deduced, I suppose, from the earliest ages, down to the present.

Now *these pious cheats of the Romish Church*, as Mr. Leslie says, *are the forest disgraces of Christianity, and bid the fairest of any one contrivance to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ, and the whole truth of the Gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot [b].* This history therefore of miracles, which is promised by that writer, induced me, more particularly at this time, to inquire into the genuin state and succession of them,

who assisted him, what were the motives, which induced him to forsake the religion, in which he was bred, made answer, “ That  
 “ a Priest of a very grave and civil behaviour had assured him, that mira-  
 “ cles had been wrought in confirmation of the Popish doctrine, and  
 “ particularly, that a Protestant woman came one day to their Sa-  
 “ crament, with intent to make sport with it, and instead of swallow-  
 “ ing the consecrated bread, found means to convey it into her  
 “ pocket; but when she was making merry afterwards in company,  
 “ with what she had done, and was going to produce the piece of bread,  
 “ which she had pocketed, she found it changed into real flesh and  
 “ blood.” And he added, “ that there was no reason to imagine,  
 “ that a person, of so reverend a character, could have any design,  
 “ or interest, to deceive him in the attestation of such a miracle.”

[b] See Leslie's Short method, vol. I. p. 24.



through all the several ages of the Christian Church, from the times of the Apostles ; in order to discover the precise period and duration of them ; and to settle some rule of discerning the true from the false ; so as to be able to give a proper reason, for admitting the miracles of one age, and rejecting those of another.

It must be confessed however, in the first place, that this claim of a miraculous power, which is now peculiar to the Church of *Rome*, was universally asserted and believed in all Christian countries, and in all ages of the Church, till the time of the Reformation. For Ecclesiastical History makes no difference between one age and another ; but carries on the succession of it's miracles, as of all other common events, through all of them indifferently, to that memorable period. But the light of the Reformation dispelled the charm : and what *Cicero* says of the *Pythian Oracle*, may be as truly said of the Popish miracles ; *when men began to be less credulous, their power vanished* [c]. For that spirit  
of

[c] Quando autem ista vis evanuit an postquam homines minus creduli esse cœperunt? Cic. De Divin. 2. 57.

[d] Some



of inquiry, with which Christendom was then animated, detected the cheat, and exposed to public view, the hidden springs and machinery of those lying wonders, by which the world had been seduced and enslaved to the tyranny of *Rome* [d].

And as the miracles of that age could not stand the test of a scrutiny, but were found, upon trial, to be the forgeries of a corrupt Clergy, so it gave just cause to suspect, that those *golden legends* of them, as they were called, which had been transmitted to them from their Ancestors, were of no better stamp, and that the Church of Christ had long been governed by the same arts. This also was found to be true by those, who made it their business, to

[d] Some of their Images were brought to *London*, and publicly broken there at *St. Paul's Cross*, in the sight of the people; that they might be fully convinced of the juggling impostures of the Monks. And in particular, the *Crucifix of Boxeley in Kent*, commonly called *the Rood of Grace*; to which many pilgrimages had been made; because it was observed sometimes to bow, and to lift itself up; to shake and stir it's head, hands and feet; to rowl it's eyes; move the lips; and bend it's brows: all which were looked upon by the abused multitude, as the effects of a divine power. These were now publicly discovered to have been cheats. For the springs were shewed, by which all these motions were made, &c.

See *Burnet's History of the Reformation*, vol. I. 242.

search



search into the records of past ages: where, though it was easy to trace the marks of the same fictions, exerted in the same manner, and for the same ends, even up to the early times of the primitive Church, yet it was difficult, to fix the origin of them, or to mark the precise æra, in which the cheat first began.

Many learned men among the Protestants have attempted indeed to settle this point; but with so little success, as to leave it at last as uncertain, as they found it; none of them having been able to adjust the exact limits between true and false miracles; or to shew, by any solid reason, how long after the days of the Apostles, the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit continued in the Church, or in what age they were actually withdrawn.

The most prevailing opinion is, that they subsisted through the three first Centuries, and then ceased in the beginning of the fourth; or as soon as Christianity came to be established by the civil power. This, I say, seems to be the most prevailing notion at this day, among the generality of the Protestants; who think it reasonable to imagine, that



miracles should then cease, when the end of them was obtained, and the Church no longer in want of them; being now delivered from all danger, and secure of success, under the protection of the greatest power on earth.

Agreeably to this notion, Archbishop *Tillotson* says, “ that on the first planting of the Christian religion in the world, God was pleased to accompany it with a miraculous power; but after it was planted, that power ceased, and God left it to be maintained by ordinary ways.” And in another place, speaking of the particular gift, *of casting out Devils*, he observes, “ that it continued the longest of any, and there was reason, that it should continue, as long as the Devil reigned, and Pagan Idolatry was kept up.—But when the powers of the world became Christian, and Satan’s kingdom was every where destroyed, then this miraculous gift also ceased, there being no farther occasion for it [*e*].” The late Dr. *Marshall* also, who translated the works of St. *Cyprian* into english, taking notice of the continuance of

[*e*] Serm. Fol. 3. it. Vol. 3. p. 488. Edit. 1735.



miracles and supernatural gifts, and especially of *prophecies and visions*, in that *Cyprianic* age, declares, “ that there are successive evidences of them, “ which speak full and home to this point, from “ the beginning of Christianity, down to the age of “ *Constantine*, in whose times, when Christianity “ had acquired the support of human powers, those “ extraordinary assistances were discontinued [*f*].” Yet this opinion, though generally received by the Protestants, is found liable still to such objections, and perplexed with such difficulties, that even those, who principally espouse it, cannot wholly acquiesce in it, but are forced to propose it with some reserve and exception.

Mr. *Dodwell*, one of the most zealous admirers of primitive Antiquity, and who has deduced the history of its miracles with the greatest accuracy, through the three first Centuries, closes his account of them, with the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity ; not daring, as he frequently declares, to venture any farther, on account of *the fabulous genius and manifest impostures*

[*f*] Epistles of *Cypr.* VII. not. b.



*of the fourth Century* [g]. But though he supposes the true miracles to have generally ceased from that time, yet he finds some particular instances of them, so strongly attested by the Fathers of the best credit, through the rest of the same century, that he cannot but admit them, as exceptions to his general rule [b].

Mr. *Whiston* contends, “ that these miraculous  
“ powers were totally withdrawn at the very time  
“ when the *Athanasian Heresy*, as he calls it, was  
“ established by the second Council of *Constan-*  
“ *tinople*, about *A. D.* 381: and that as soon as  
“ the Church became *Athanasian, Antichristian*, and

[g] Fateor ibi multa legi, quarti seculi impostorumque genium referentia, ut nolim ea certioribus immiscere—Quam fuerint quarti seculi Scriptores fabulis dediti, è *vita Pauli Hieronymiana*; and *Athanasiana Antonij*, &c. intelligimus. Differt. in Iren. 2. §. LV.

Ex ipsa miraculorum historia satis constat, a quarto tandem seculo & temporibus *Eusebij*, sensim decrevisse vera, & in desuetudinem abiisse miracula. ib. LIX.

Ego me infra prima secula contineo, ante receptam in Imperio Christianitatem, &c. ib. LXII.

[b] *Ckrysoftomus*—fatetur suo etiamnum tempore nonnulla fuisse signa, sed & numero pauca, & locis variis hinc inde dispersa.—Qui hæc itaque agnovit negatis tamen aliis, erat proculdubio & illa agniturus, si pari omnia evidentia constitissent. ib. LIX.



1           INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

“ *Popish*, they ceased immediately, and the Devil lent it his own cheating and fatal powers in their stead [*i*].”

Dr. *Waterland* on the other hand, the perpetual defender of *Athanasius*, in his treatise on *the importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, often affirms, “ that the miraculous powers of the Church  
“ continued through the three first centuries at  
“ least, as a manifest proof, that the true faith  
“ was there preserved, where the spirit of truth so  
“ visibly resided [*k*]:” and in the addenda to the same work, he corrects himself, as it were, for a mistake, in confining them to such narrow limits, which, on the authority of *Paulinus*, he endeavours to extend, *to the latter end of the fourth century* [*l*].

Dr. *Chapman* declares, “ that tho’ the establishment of Christianity by the civil power, abated the necessity of miracles, and occasioned a visible  
“ decrease of them, yet after that revolution, there  
“ were instances of them still, as public, as clear,  
“ as well attested, as any in the earlier ages [*m*].”

[*i*] See his Account of *the Dæmoniacs*, p. 65.

[*k*] See p. 299, 382, 383, 425.

[*l*] Ibid. p. 497.

[*m*] See *Miscell. Tracts*. p. 170.



And not content, like Dr. *Waterland*, with carrying the succession of them, to the end of the fourth century, he goes on to assure us, *that the fifth also had its portion, tho' smaller than the fourth* [n]: which he confirms by several instances, drawn from the middle of that fifth century, and then refers us to Dr. *Berriman*, for the accurate defence of another miracle, wrought in confutation of the *Arian Heresy*, which brings us to the end of it [o].

Thus these eminent Divines, pursuing their several systems, and ambitious of improving still upon each other's discoveries, seem unwarily to have betrayed the Protestant cause, by transferring the miraculous powers of the Church, the pretended insigns of truth and orthodoxy, into the hands of its enemies; and yielding up this sacred depositum, like the old *Ancilia of Pagan Rome*, to the defence and support of *Popish Rome*. For it was in these very primitive ages, and especially in the *third, fourth and fifth centuries*, *those flourishing times of miraculous powers*, as Dr. *Chapman* calls them, in which the chief corruptions of Popery were either actually introduced, or the seeds of them so effectually

[n] Ibid. p. 173.

[o] Ib. p. 175.



sown, that they could not fail of producing the fruits, which we now see. By these corruptions I mean, *the institution of Monkery; the worship of reliques; invocation of Saints; prayers for the Dead; the superstitious use of Images; of the Sacraments; of the Sign of the Cross; and of consecrated oil;* by the efficacy of all which rites, and as a proof of their divine origin, perpetual miracles are affirmed to have been wrought in these very centuries.

For example; Monkery had it's beginning in the third, and a full establishment in the fourth century: in which all the principal Fathers of the Church, both *Greek and Latin*, employed their authority and eloquence, to extol the perfection and recommend the practice of it; by writing the lives of particular Monks; celebrating their wonderful sanctity and miraculous gifts; and founding monasteries also, where-ever they travelled. St *Athanasius* was one of the first, who, from the pattern of the *Ægyptian* Monasteries, introduced them into *Italy and Rome*, where they had been held before in utter contempt [*p*]. St. *Basil* calls it an *Angelical*

[*p*] Ignominiosum, ut tunc putabatur, & vile in populis nomen  
—Hieron. Oper. Tom. 4. par. 2. p. 780. Edit. Benedict.

*institution:*



*institution: a blessed and Evangelic life, leading to the mansions of the Lord [q]. St. Jerom declares, the Societies of Monks and Nuns, to be the very flower and most precious stone among all the ornaments of the Church [r]. St. Chrysostom calls it, a way of life worthy of heaven, nor at all inferior to that of Angels [s]. And St. Austin styles them always,*  
in

[q] Basil. Oper. Tom. 3. p. 101, 261, 310, 473.

[r] Certe flos quidam & pretiosissimus lapis inter Ecclesiastica ornamenta, Monachorum & Virginum chorus est. Hieron. ib. p. 551.

[s] Καὶ γὰρ πολυταῖαν ἔρανῳ πρέπασαν εἰλάνῳ, καὶ ἀγγέλων ἔδειν χειρὸς διακρίναι. Chryf. Oper. Tom. 1. p. 94. A. Edit. Benedict.

N. B. This same Father wrote three books against *the Oppugners of the Monastic life*; [Oper. T. 1. p. 44.] and a separate one besides, to prove it to be preferable even to that of a King. [ib. p. 116.] Among many other instances of this preference, he observes, that a King, when deposed and fallen from his throne, cannot recover it without the utmost difficulty; whereas a Monk, who falls from his virtue, quickly recovers it by his penitence: of which he gives a curious example, in a story, which he relates in another place, of an old Monk, who after he had nobly sustained all the difficulties and fatigues of that discipline, was caught at last by the wiles of Satan, and fired with so violent a concupiscence for women, that he ran away from his Cell, to a bawdy-house in the neighbouring City, in order to quench his flame: where he had no sooner satiated his lust, than returning presently to his duty, he became so strict a penitent, that  
within



in a peculiar manner, *the Servants of God* [*t*]. By the influence therefore of these Fathers, and the many lies and forged miracles, which they diligently propagated in honor of the Monks, innumerable Monasteries, as they themselves tell us, were over the *eastern World*; but especially in *Syria, Palæstine and Ægypt*; whose deserts were covered with them; and where, in the next age, there were some, which are said to have had *five thousand Monks* in them [*u*].

As to *the reliques of the Martyrs*, we find St.

within a short time after, when the country was afflicted with a famine, the people were directed by an express revelation from heaven, to apply to him, as the onely person, who could relieve them from it by his prayers; by the force of which, the famine was accordingly averted. Ibid. p. 29, 30.

[*t*] *De Servis Dei* sæpissime dicitur, tot annos ille in hoc vel in illo Monasterio fedit. August. Serm. 215. Op. T. 5. p. 947. D. Edit. Bened.

Cupiebas in ea vita vivere, in qua *Servi Dei*, Monachi vivunt. Epist. ad Bonifac. 220. T. 2. p. 812.

[*u*] Exemplo itaque ejus, per totam Palæstinam innumerabilia Monasteria esse cœperunt. [Hieron. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 82.] Quid referamus Armenios, quid Persas, quid Indiæ & Æthiopiarum populos, ipsamque juxta Ægyptum, fertilem Monachorum—cunctaque Orientis examina—ibid. p. 551.

*Chrysostom*



*Chrysostom* frequently haranguing on the great blessings, which the Church reaped from them, *and the daily miracles which were wrought by them* [x]: and he concludes one of his Homilies, on Two female Martyrs, *Bernice and Prosdoce*, in the following manner; “with this ardor therefore, let us  
 “fall down before their reliques: let us embrace  
 “their coffins; for these may have some power,  
 “since their bones have so great an one: and not  
 “onely on the day of their Festival, but on other  
 “days likewise, let us fix ourselves as it were to  
 “them, and entreat them to be our patrons [y]:” and in his other Homilies, he often uses the same peroration “to dwell in their Sepulchres, to fix  
 “themselves to their coffins; that not only their  
 “bones, but their tombs, and their urns also overflowed with benedictions [z].”

St. *Basil* informs us, “that all, who were pressed with any difficulty or distress, used to fly for  
 “relief to the tombs of the Martyrs; and whosoever

[x] “Ἰκανα μὲν τὸν λόγον πεισώσασθαι, καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ὑπὸ τῶν μαρτύρων γινόμενα θαύματα. Chrysost. Op. T. 2. p. 555. Ed. Bened.

[y] Ibid. p. 645. C.

[z] Ib. p. 669. E.



“ did but touch their reliques, acquired some share  
 “ of their sanctity [*a*].” In the same age also,  
 when *Vigilantius*, a learned and eminent Presbyter  
 of the Church, wrote a book just as a Protestant  
 would now write, *against the institution of Monks;  
 the celibacy of the Clergy; praying for the dead,  
 and to the Martyrs; adoring their reliques; cele-  
 brating their Vigils; and lighting up candles to them  
 after the manner of the Pagans*; St. *Ferom*, who  
 answers him, defends all those rites with a most  
 outrageous zeal and acrimony of language, and  
 treats *Vigilantius*, as a most profligate Heretic, ut-  
 tering the blasphemies, with which the Devil had  
 inspired him against the sacred doctrines of the  
 Church: “ Answer me, says he, how it comes to  
 “ pass, that in this vile dust and ashes of the Mar-  
 “ tyrs, there is so great a manifestation of signs and  
 “ wonders. I see, thou most wretched of mortals,  
 “ what thou are so grieved at, what so afraid of;  
 “ that unclean spirit, which compels thee to write  
 “ thus, has oft been tortured, and even now is  
 “ tortured by this vile dust [*b*].” St. *Austin* also af-

[*a*] Basil. Op. T. 2. p. 155. it. T. 3. 536.

[*b*] Hieron. Tom. 4. par 2. p. 285, 286.



“ firms, “ that at *Milan*, while he was there  
 “ present, the reliques of the Martyrs, *Protasius*  
 “ and *Gervasius*, which lay buried in a place un-  
 “ known, were reveled to St. *Ambrose* in a dream;  
 “ and that by the touch onely of the same reliques,  
 “ a blind man was restored to his sight; of which  
 “ the whole people was witness, who flocked in  
 “ crouds to the bodies of the said Martyrs [c].”

In the sacrament also of *the Eucharist*, several  
 strange abuses were introduced long before this fourth  
 age. In *Justin Martyr's* time, within fifty years  
 after the days of the Apostles, *the cup was constantly*  
*mixed with water, and a portion of the consecrated*  
*elements sent also to the absent [d]*: which soon be-  
 came the source of much Superstition. For that  
 mixture, considered at first as prudential onely, and  
 indifferent, is declared by *Irenæus*, to have been  
*taught and practised by our Saviour [e]*; and by

[c] Immenso populo teste res gesta est. De Civ. Dei. lib. 22. c. 8. Vid. etiam Hieron. ibid. p. 552. Samaritanos pergere, & Johannis Baptistæ, & Elifæi, & Abdiæ pariter cineres adorare.

[d] Just. Mart. Apol. 1. p. 96. Edit. Thirlb.

[e] Accipiens panem, suum corpus esse confitebatur; & temperamentum calicis, suum sanguinem confirmavit. Iren. l. 4. c. 57. it. l. 5. c. 2. & 36.



St. *Cyprian*, to have been enjoined to himself *by a divine revelation* [*f*]. The consecrated bread also, which was sent at first onely to the sick, was in *Tertullian's* and *Cyprian's* days, carried home by the communicants, and locked up in boxes as a divine treasure for their private use [*g*]. From this time it began to work Miracles; and was applied to drive Devils out of haunted houses [*h*]; and carried with them by people, in their journeys and voyages, as an amulet or charm, to secure them from all dangers both by sea and land [*i*].

This

[*f*] Nec nos putes, nostra & humana conscribere, aut ultronea voluntate hoc nobis audacter assumere—admonitos autem nos scias, ut in calice offerendo Dominica traditio fervetur—ut calix, qui in commemoratione ejus offertur, mixtus vino offeratur. Epist. ad Cæcil. 63. Edit. Rigalt.

[*g*] Cum quædam arcam suam, in qua Domini sanctum fuit, manibus indignis tentasset aperire, igne inde surgente deterrita est. Cypr. de lapsis. p. 176.

[*h*] Nam etiam nunc fiunt miracula, in ejus nomine, five per Sacramenta ejus, &c. *Vid. August. de Civ. D.* 22. 8. §. 1, 6.

[*i*] *St. Ambrose* relates a remarkable instance of this, in the case of one of his intimate friends, called *Satyrus*; who was a pious and zealous Christian, but had not yet received the Sacrament, or *been initiated*, as he calls it, *in the more perfect mysteries*. In this state, he happened to suffer Shipwreck in his passage from Afric, and the

Ship



This Sacrament was administred likewise, in all their public communions, to infants, even of the tenderest age, before they were able to speak [k]: and was constantly stiled, *the Sacrifice of the body of Christ; which was always offered up, as Cyprian says, for the Martyrs, in their annual Festivals: as it was also, according to St. Jerom, by the Bishop of Rome, over the venerable bones of St. Peter and St. Paul* [l]. Hence flowed those amazing titles, which were given to it in this fourth age; of *most*

Ship itself to be broken to Pieces, upon which, says *Ambrose*, “*Satyrus* not being afraid of death, but to die onely, before he had partaken of those mysteries, begged of some of the company, who had been initiated, that they would lend him the divine Sacrament, (which they carried about with them) not to feed his curiosity, by peeping into the inside of the Box, but to obtain the benefit of his Faith, for he wrapped up the Mysteries in his Handkerchief, and then tying it about his neck, threw himself into the Sea; never troubling himself to look out for a plank, which might help him to swim, since he wanted nothing more, than the Arms of his Faith: nor did his Hopes fail him, for he was the first of the company, who got safe to the Shore.” *De Excessu Satyri*, l. i. §. 43, 44. p. 1125. Op. T. 2. Ed. Bened.

[k] Cypr. *ibid.* p. 175.

[l] *Sacrificia pro eis semper, ut meministis, offerimus, quoties Martyrum passiones & dies, anniversaria commemoratione celebramus.* Id. *Epist.* 34. p. 48. Vid. it. *Hieron.* T. 4. par. 2. p. 284.



*tremendous mystery; dreadful solemnity; terrible to Angels; Mystic table [m]; whose very Utensils and sacred coverings, as St. Jerom says, were not to be considered, like things inanimate, and void of sense, to have no sanctity, but to be worshipped with the same majesty, as the body and blood of our Lord [n]. And what is all this, but a description of that Sacrifice of the Mass, which the Romanists offer at this day, both for the living and the dead; and the same miraculous tales, which they still relate, of their transubstantiated bread?*

The custom of *praying for the dead*, had also a very early origin: for it was common, as we learn from *Tertullian*, even in the second century [o];  
and

[m] Επ' αὐτῶν πάλιν Φρικωδεσάτων μυστηρίων. [Chrysost. Oper. T. x. p. 568.] τραπέζης καὶ σφύδρα Φρικωδεσάτης. [ib. p. 245. D.] ἢ καὶ "Αφ-γελλοι Φρίτῃσι. Id. T. xi. p. 22. C.

[n] Ut discant, qui ignorant,——qua debeant veneratione sancta suscipere, & altaris Christi ministerio deservire; sacrosque calices, & sancta velamina, & cetera, quæ ad cultum Dominicæ passionis pertinent, non quasi inania & sensu carentia, sanctimoniam non habere, sed ex consortio corporis & sanguinis Domini, eadem qua corpus ejus & sanguis majestate veneranda. Hieron. Ep. 88. ad Theopil. T. 4. par. 2. p. 728.

[o] Enimvero & pro anima ejus orat, & refrigerium interim ad-  
postulat ei, & in prima resurrectione consortium, & offert annuis  
diebus



and became the universal practice of the following ages : so that in the fourth, we find it reckoned as a sort of *Heresy*, to deny the efficacy of it [p]. The purpose of it was to procure relief and refreshment to the departed souls, in some intermediate state of expiatory pains, which, according to the opinion of those times, all men were to suffer for their sins, except the Martyrs, and Saints of the first class [q]. A doctrine and practice, which could not fail of giving birth to the Popish Purgatory.

The *Sign of the Cross* likewise, was the subject

diebus dormitionis ejus. De Monogam. x. p. 682. A. Edit. Nic. Rigalt. N. B. This passage may want a little explication. *Tertullian*, in this treatise, is labouring to prove, that the second marriages of Christians are utterly unlawful, and forbidden to them by the Gospel, and though the parties be separated from each other by the death of either, that the matrimonial bond still subsists, and obliges the Survivor : *For the widow*, says he, *prays for the Soul of her departed husband ; and begs refreshment for him in his intermediate state ; and to be a partner with him in the first resurrection ; and makes an oblation for him every year, on the Day of his death.* By all which she acknowledges and keeps up her conjugal union, and cannot therefore marry any other man ; because, to have one husband in the Spirit, and another in the Flesh, is adultery, &c.

[p] Vid. Epiphan. Hæres. lxxv. § 3 and 7.

[q] Vid. Orig. con. Celsum. l. 6. p. 292. Tertull. De Anim. c. 55, 58.

of



of much superstition in those ages. “ *Every step*  
“ *that we take, says Tertullian; when we come in*  
“ *or go out; put on our cloaths, or our shoes; when*  
“ *we bath, eat, light up candles, go to bed, or sit*  
“ *down; we mark our foreheads with the sign of the*  
“ *Cross.* “ If for these, and other acts of discipline  
“ of the same kind, you demand a text of Scrip-  
“ ture, you will find none; but tradition will be  
“ alledged to you, as the prescriber of them [r].”  
It was thought a sure preservative against all sorts of  
malignity, poisons, or fascination; and effectual  
to drive away evil spirits; and is affirmed by the  
principal Fathers of the fourth century, to have  
wrought many illustrious miracles. “ This sign, says  
“ St. *Chrysostom*, both in the days of our Forefathers,  
“ and in our own, has thrown open gates, that  
“ were shut; destroyed the effects of poisonous  
“ drugs; dissolved the force of hemlock; and cured  
“ the bites of venomous beasts [s].”

[r] Ad omnem progressum atque promotum; ad omnem aditum  
atque exitum, ad vestitum, ad calciatum, ad lavacra, ad mensas, ad  
lumina, ad cubilia, ad sedilia, quæcunque nos conversatio exercet,  
frontem crucis signaculo terimus. Harum & aliarum ejusmodi dis-  
ciplinæ si legem expostules Scripturarum, nullam invenies, tra-  
ditio tibi prætendetur auctrix, &c. De. Coron. 3.

[s] Τὸ σημεῖον καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν προσόνων ἡμῶν, καὶ νῦν, θύρας ἀνέωξε κεκ-  
λεισμένας, &c. Tom. 7. p. 552. A.

The



The *sacred oil* also of the Church, was held in great veneration in these same days, as an universal remedy in all diseases. For which purpose, it was either prepared and dispensed by Priests and holy Monks; or was taken from *the lamps* which were burning before the reliques of the Martyrs. St. *Jerom* mentions great numbers, who had been cured of *the bites of venomous animals, by touching their wounds with the first sort* [t]: And St. *Chrysostom* speaks of many, who had been healed of their distempers, *by anointing themselves with the second* [u]. And St. *Austin* affirms, from his own knowledge, that a *young woman had been freed from a Devil*; and a *young man restored even from death to life, by the use of it* [x].

[t] Benedicto itaque oleo universi agricolæ atque pastores, tangentes vulnera, certam salutem resumebant. Vit. S. Hilarion. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 86.

[u] Καὶ ἴσασιν ὅσοι μετὰ πίστεως καὶ εὐκαιρίας ἐλαίῳ χρισάμενοι νοσήματα ἔλυσαν. Chrys. ib. p. 337. C.

[x] Hipponensem quandam Virginem scio, cum se oleo perunxisset, cui pro illa orans Presbyter instillaverat lacrymas suas, mox a Dæmonio fuisse sanatam. [De Civ. D. l. 22. c. 8. §. 8.]

Rurfus apud nos, *Irenæi* cujusdam filius ægritudine extinctus est. Cumque corpus jaceret exanimum, atque exequiæ pararentur, amicorum quidam fuggeffit, ut ejusdem Martyris oleo, corpus perungeretur. Factum est, & revixit. ibid. §. 18.



Lastly, as to *Images and pictures*, it appears from St. *Chrysostom*, that great numbers of them were standing in the principal Churches of that age [y]; and from the other writers of the same age; that the acts of the Saints and Martyrs began to be painted on the walls of those particular Churches, which were dedicated to their names [z]: and it is natural to imagine, that they would not long be considered, as mere ornaments, or memorials, or books, as they were called, for the illiterate, but would gradually acquire a share of that veneration, which the bones of those, whom they represented, had already acquired in the same Churches: and we are told accordingly by St. *Austin*, that he knew many, *who were actually the adorers of them* [a].

These were the principles and the practices of the fourth Century; as they are declared by the most eminent Fathers of that age: whence every one

[y] Oper. Tom. xi. p. 78.

[z] Forte requiratur quanam ratione gerendi  
 Sederit hæc nobis sententia, *pingere Sanctas*  
*Raro more damos*, &c. Vid. Paulini Oper. Natal. ix.

[a] Novi multos esse Sepulchrorum & picturarum adoratores. De Morib. Eccles. Cathol. Op. T. i. p. 34.



may see, what a resemblance they bear to the present rites of the Popish Church. But some perhaps will be apt to suspect, that I am really defending the corruptions of that Church, by assigning to them an origin so ancient and venerable: and the suspicion indeed may seem plausible, since I have been saying little else, but what the Papists themselves would say on the same occasion. Yet it is no more, than what fact and truth oblige me to say; and no controversy, I hope, will ever heat me, or prejudice biafs me so far, as to make me deny or dissemble, what the conviction of my own mind requires me to confess. But whatever advantage the Romanists may hope to reap from this concession, it really gives them none at all. Our dispute with them is, not how ancient, but how true their doctrines and practices are: And if they are not derived from Christ or his Apostles, nor founded in the holy Scriptures, it is wholly indifferent to us Protestants, from what age they drew their birth; whether it was from the *four first*, or the *four last* centuries of the Church.

But this short sketch, which I have been giving, of those primitive times, was not designed so much,



to illustrate the origin of their rites, as to lay open the grounds of their miracles; and to shew what reasons the Romish Church hath to espouse, and what the Protestant Churches, if they are consistent with themselves, to suspect and disclame them. For example, after the conversion of the *Roman* Empire to Christianity, we shall find the greatest part of their boasted miracles to have been wrought either by *Monks*, or *Reliques*, or *the Sign of the Cross*, or *consecrated Oil*: wherefore if we admit the Miracles, we must necessarily admit the rites, for the sake of which they were wrought: they both rest on the same bottom, and mutually establish each other. For it is a maxim, which must be allowed by all Christians, that whenever any sacred rite or religious institution becomes the instrument of miracles, we ought to consider that rite, as confirmed by divine approbation. “ I know, says one of the ablest writers of  
“ the *Romish* Church, by the evidence of manifest  
“ and incorrupt tradition, that there hath always  
“ been a never-interrupted succession of men from  
“ the Apostles time, believing, professing, and  
“ practising such and such doctrines, by evident  
“ argument of credibility, as miracles, sanctity,  
unity,



“ unity, &c. and by all those ways, whereby the  
 “ Apostles and our blessed Saviour himself con-  
 “ firmed their doctrines: And we are assured, that  
 “ what the said never-interrupted Church propo-  
 “ seth, doth deserve to be accepted and acknow-  
 “ ledged as a divine truth [b].” And thus far we  
 must own, the Jesuit argues rightly; that if we re-  
 ceive those *arguments of credibility*, as he calls them,  
 we must receive the doctrines which accompany  
 them, as so many *divine verities, reveled and at-*  
*tested by Almighty God.* So that if the authority of  
 a *Chrysostom*, or a *Ferom*, or an *Austin* can oblige  
 us to believe the miracles of the fourth century,  
 they must oblige us also, to espouse the rites, which  
 those miracles confirmed, and those Fathers practi-  
 sed.

Dr. *Chapman* however, not aware perhaps of  
 this consequence, or not allowing it to have any  
 force, is not satisfied with asserting the miracles of  
 the fourth century, but, as if more were still  
 wanted to the support of the Christian cause, frankly

[b] See Mr. *Knot*, on Charity maintained, &c. in the Works of  
*Chillingworth*, 7th Edit. c. vi. p. 228. §. 6.



undertakes the defence also of the fifth; in which all those superstitious practices, above mentioned, had gained a greater root, and more general establishment: And while the warmest admirers of the primitive times, can hardly digest the wonderful tales of the fourth age, on the united testimony of all its renowned Fathers, he thinks himself obliged, to espouse those of the more corrupt age, which follows, upon the single authority of *Theodoret*.

But to this, I shall speak more fully hereafter, in the following work; where I shall consider those particular miracles, which Dr. *Chapman* has selected, as the proper objects of our belief, and defended as such, against the enemies of the Christian faith. In the mean while, I shall offer only a single passage from the same *Theodoret*, on whose testimony he lays so great a stress, which will help, not only to confirm what I have already been advancing, but give us a specimen also, of the character of this Father, as well as of the state of Christianity in this fifth age.

“ The Temples of our Martyrs, says he, are  
“ shining and conspicuous; eminent for their gran-  
“ dor, and the variety of their ornaments; and dis-  
“ playing



“ playing far and wide the splendor of their beauty.  
“ These we visit, not once or twice, nor five times  
“ in the year, but frequently offer up hymns each  
“ day to the Lord of them ; in health we beg the  
“ continuance of it ; in sickness, the removal of it ;  
“ the childless beg children, and the barren to be-  
“ come mothers ; and when these blessings are ob-  
“ tained, we beg the secure enjoyment of them.  
“ When we undertake any journey, we beg them  
“ to be our companions and guides in it : and when  
“ we return safe, we pay them our thanks : and  
“ that those, who pray with faith and sincerity,  
“ obtain what they ask, is manifestly testified by  
“ the number of offerings, which are made to  
“ them, in consequence of the benefits received.  
“ For some offer the figures of eyes ; some of feet ;  
“ some of hands, made either of gold or of silver ;  
“ which the Lord accepts, tho’ but of little va-  
“ lue ; measuring the gift, by the faculties of the  
“ giver. But all these are the evident proofs of the  
“ cures of as many distempers ; being placed there,  
“ as monuments of the fact, by those, who have  
“ been made whole. The same monuments likewise  
“ proclaim the power of the dead. Whose power  
also



“ also demonstrates their God, to be the true  
“ God [c].”

Now this is nothing else, but the very picture of that same superstition, which is practised at this day by the Papists, and was borrowed of old from the Pagans [d]. *Livy* tells the same thing of the Temples of the Heathen Gods which *Theodore*t does here of the Temples of their Saints; that *they were rich in the number of offerings*, which the people used to make *in return for the cures*, and benefits which they had received from them [e]. In both cases, we allow the offerings to be real, but take the cures, or the miraculous part of them at least, to be imaginary: and as we reject *Livy's* miracles without scruple, or any hurt to the faith of history, so we may reject *Theodore*t's too, without shaking the evidence of any thing else, that is credible.

Thus we see, to what a state of things, the miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries would re-

[c] Serm. 8. de Martyrib.

[d] See my Letter from *Rome* on this subject.

[e] Epidaurus, inclita Æsculapij nobili templo,——tum donis dives erat, quæ remediorum salutarium ægri mercedem sacraverant. Deo. lib. 45. 28.



duce us : they would call us back again to the old superstition of our ancestors ; would fill us with *Monks and reliques, and Masses*, and all the other trinkets, which the treasury of *Rome* can supply : for this is the necessary effect of that zeal, which would engage us in the defence of them. But if the miracles of these later ages must needs be rejected ; and if, as I have said above, Ecclesiastical History makes no difference between them, and those of the earlier ages, it may reasonably be asked, where then are we to stop ? and to what period must we confine ourselves ? And this indeed is the grand difficulty, which was the chief object of my attention, through this whole inquiry ; and what has puzzled all the other Doctors, who have been considering the same quæstion before me. But before I give any answer to it, or declare my own opinion, it may be proper, to premise a remark or two, on the insufficiency of the several systems already advanced ; and to lay down some general principles, which may lead us to a more rational solution of the matter, than what has hitherto been offered.

Mr. *Dodwell*, as we have seen above, chuses to shut up the history of true miracles with the *three*  
*first*



*first centuries*; condemning those of the fourth, as generally forged and fabulous: for the proof of which, he appeals to the monstrous fictions, which St. *Athanasius*, St. *Jerom*, and St. *Gregory* of *Nyssa*, have related. And thus far, I intirely agree with him; that the pretended miracles of this age are utterly incredible; and particularly those, to which he refers us, and to which we might add many more, affirmed also from their own knowledge, by St. *Austin*, St. *Epiphanius*, and all the other Saints of the same times. Yet after so free a censure on the miracles of the fourth age, the same learned writer thinks it necessary still, to make some exceptions, for a few of them, which St. *Chrysostom* has attested. But such a distinction appears to be wholly groundless: or if there be any difference between this particular Father and the rest of them, it is clearly to the disadvantage of *Chrysostom*, when considered in the character of a witness. For his peculiar talents were those of a declamatory Preacher, whose art lay, in warming the passions, not in convincing the reason; and whose pompous stile and rhetorical florishes, instead of being adapted to a simple narrative of plain facts, was apt rather to exaggerate



aggerate plain facts into miracles [f]. And as there is no ground for any preference, in his personal character, so there is none likewise in the particular miracles, which he attests; which are all said to be wrought, not by the ministry, of any living and holy men, but by *the reliques of the dead*; or *the oil of their lamps*; or *the sign of the Cross*.

Dr. *Waterland* seems to have been of the same mind in general with Mr. *Dodwell*, concerning the miracles of the fourth century; yet being loth to part with them, and much more, to fix any slur on the credit of it's principal Fathers, has used a little artifice in the manner of declaring it. For after he has often affirmed, *that the miraculous powers of the Church subsisted through the three first centuries* at least, he adds the following amendment to it, *Nay, and if we may believe Paulinus, who reports it as an eye-witness, they continued down to the latter end of the fourth* [g]. But why must we be referred to *Paulinus* onely, in a quæstion of such

[f] Ac ne forsitan Rhetores vobis displiceant, quorum artis est verisimilia magis, quam vera dicere——Hieron. Oper. T. 4. par. 2. p. 236.

[g] Import. of the Trin. p. 497.



importance? a name, unknown to the greatest part of his readers; while the names of *Athanasius*, *Basil*, *Austin*, *Jerom*, *Chrysostom*, are in every body's mouth, and appealed to by himself on every other occasion; and who have written whole books, on the miracles of that very age, wrought by *Saints*, and *Monks*, and *reliques*; many of which they have reported likewise, as eye-witnesses, as well as *Paulinus*. The omission therefore of these greater names, which could not possibly be accidental, is a clear, tho' tacit confession that he knew them all to have forfeited their credit, in this particular cause: and that even his beloved *Athanasius*, on whose faith he had pinned his own, and on the defence of whose orthodoxy, he had spent his whole life and studies, was not to be trusted at last with the report of a miracle.

But what is it after all, that *Paulinus* could teach us, more credibly than any of the rest? He was a noble convert from Paganism, and Bishop of *Nola* in *Italy*: where he built a Church to St. *Felix* the Martyr, with whose acts he painted it, and with whose reliques he enriched it; and has celebrated, both in prose and verse, the miracles performed by those



those reliques [*b*]. But the particular miracle, for which we are referred to him by the Doctor as an eye-witness, is this; that “when St. *Ambrose*,  
 “upon the conviction of a certain offender, was  
 “pronouncing the sentence of excommunication  
 “against him; in the very instant of delivering him  
 “over to Satan, and while the words were yet in  
 “his mouth, the Devil began to seize and tear him,  
 “as his own, to the great amazement and wonder  
 “of *Paulinus*, and the rest, who were present [*i*].”

On the whole then; after the strictest attention to what both the ancients and the moderns also have delivered on this subject, I find great reason to be convinced, that the pretended miracles of the fourth century, were not onely in general, and for the greatest part, but intirely and universally, the effects of fraud and imposture. Nor can I see the least ground to admit any exception, either with Mr. *Dodwell*, for those reported by St. *Chrysostom*; or with Dr. *Waterland*, for those, by *Paulinus*, For

[*b*] Vid. Paulin. Peom. xvii. p. 77, 78. Oper. Edit. Par. 4to.

[*i*] See Dr. *Waterland*, *ibid*.



I take it to be a maxim, on which we may safely depend, that wherever the Bishops, the Clergy, and the principal Champions of the Christian cause, are found to be tampering with false miracles, and establishing new rites and doctrines by lies and forgeries, it would be vain for us, to look for any true miracles in that age, and that Church. And this was actually the case of the fourth century : in which all it's most illustrious Fathers, now Saints of the Catholic Church ; St. *Athanasius*, St. *Epiphanius*, St. *Basil*, St. *Gregory of Nyssa*, St. *Ambrose*, St. *Jerom*, St. *Austin*, and St. *Chrysostom* have all severally recorded and solemnly attested a number of miracles, said to be wrought in confirmation of some favorite institutions of those days, which, in the judgement of all the learned and candid Protestants, are manifestly fictitious, and utterly incredible.

We have now therefore gained some footing and ground as it were to stand upon. For this discovery of the state of the fourth century, will reflect fresh light on our searches, both backwards and forwards ; and from it's middle situation, give us a clearer view, as well into the earlier, as the later ages. For example ; if we suppose the miraculous



culous powers of the Church to have been withdrawn, in the beginning of this century, the first inference, which it suggests, is, that they were withdrawn likewise through all the succeeding centuries. Because the reasons, for which they are imagined to have ceased at this particular period, grow stronger still in every later age, as the Church was every day gaining strength and a firmer establishment, not onely from the protection of the Magistrate, but from an authority and power of it's own, independent on the civil Government.

But above all, when, in all these later ages, instead of meeting with genuin miracles, we find fables and fictions, assuming that sacred character, and abounding still more and more, and, by the pretence of a divine authority, giving a sanction to *Heathenish rites and superstitious doctrines*, it would be childish, to expect the revival of real miracles, unless it were to detect and destroy the effects of those false ones, which were so evidently corrupting the faith and worship of the Christian Church. Since the miracles then of the fifth century, which our Doctors so strenuously defend, instead of defeating the frauds of the fourth, tend still to confirm them ;



them ; being performed chiefly by the same instruments, and for the same ends ; we must necessarily rank them all under the same class of mere forgeries. But these advocates of the primitive miracles have not yet given us the least hint, or reason to imagine, that they intend to stop here, or to confine themselves even to the fifth century : since the same principles which carried them so far, would carry them still farther, if the credit of Ecclesiastical History, or it's miracles should happen to be attacked by an Infidel or Heretic.

For example ; *Pope Gregory* the first, commonly called *the Great*, wrote *four books of Dialogues*, in which he describes *the lives and miracles of the Italian Monks* ; many of them from his own knowledge, and the rest, as he declares, from the testimony of grave and venerable persons, on whose fidelity he could depend. These books were written in the end of the sixth century, and are filled with a number of stories, so grossly absurd, and fabulous, that it would be difficult, one would think, to find any old woman in these days, so weakly credulous, as to believe them. They inform us of many persons “ actually raised from the dead ; many blind re-  
“ stored



“ stored to sight ; and, all sorts of diseases cured,  
 “ by the prayers or touch of those Monks [k]:  
 “ Of their walking upon water as freely, as up-  
 “ on dry land ; of rivers drawn by them from  
 “ their natural course, and following them into a  
 “ new channel, which they traced out to them. Of  
 “ inundations of water rising up almost to the roofs  
 “ of Churches, without entering the doors of them,  
 “ which stood open : Of the arm of an Executio-  
 “ ner, fixed upright in the air, as it was lifted up,  
 “ to strike off the head of one of those holy men,  
 “ and restored by him on condition, that it should  
 “ never again behead any Christian : Of vessels of  
 “ oil and wine miraculously replenished ; and of  
 “ pieces of gold, as fresh as from the mint, dropt  
 “ from heaven into their laps :” with numberless  
 other miracles, more trifling still and despicable con-  
 trived chiefly to advance *the honor of Monkery ; the*  
*worship of Saints and of the blessed Virgin ; the be-*  
*lief of a Purgatory ; and the divine effects of Holy*  
*water, &c. [l].*

[k] Vid. Gregor. Magn. Dial. l. 1. c. 2. 10. 12 : l. 2. 32 : l. 2, 17, 33, &c.

[l] Ibid. l. 2. c. 7 : l. 3. 9, 19, 37 : l. 1. 5, 9, 10. l. 4. 15, 16, 39, 40.



The apparent forgery of these miracles, and the confident attestation of them by *Gregory*, has induced many Protestants, and even some Papists also, to call in question the genuineness of these books: but the learned *Cave*, after duly weighing all the arguments, on the one side and the other, takes them to have been really written by *Gregory the Great*; who indulged his credulity in them, he says, and gave more attention to fables, than he ought to have done, as all, who judge equitably and without prejudice, will easily allow [m]. But these Dialogues contain several miracles, said to have been wrought in confutation of the *Arian Heresy*; of which Dr. *Berriman* makes some use, in his elaborate defence of the *Athanasian Doctrine*; where speaking of the objections, which have been made against the authority of the Dialogues, he takes occasion to observe; that as far as those objections arise from the miraculousness of the things related, he sees not, why we should dispute the facts, unless it could be proved, as it certainly cannot, that miracles were then ceased [n].

[m] Hist. Litter. V. i. p. 543.

[n] See Historical Account of the Trinitarian. Controver. Serm. vii. p. 356. not. q.



Thus the miraculous powers of the Church are expressly avowed by him, to the end even of the sixth century; in which Popery had gained a full establishment: yet this Protestant Divine cannot conceive the least reason to dispute *the miraculousness of those facts* which established it; nay, defies any man to prove, *that miracles were yet ceased in this Popish age.*

In his accurate defence of that miracle of the fifth century, referred to above, amongst his other testimonies, he mentions the authority of this same *Gregory the Great*, and of his contemporary, *Isidore of Sevil*, who had too much learning and judgement, he says, *to be deceived in so important a fact* [o]. And since he thinks them infallible, in reporting a fact, which happened, as he owns, near *an hundred years* before, he has much more reason, to think them so, in relating the facts of their own times: of which times however, Dr. *Cave* gives us the following character, under that of *Evagrius*, the principal Historian of them, of whom he says; “ that  
“ he was agreeable enough in his stile, and more  
“ accurate in the orthodoxy of his doctrines, than the

[o] See Berrim. *ibid.* p. 330.



“ other Historians, but too credulous, and much ad-  
 “ dicted to fables, as it is manifest to all, who are  
 “ not blinded by their prejudices, from the stories,  
 “ which he relates on every occasion, concerning  
 “ *the Cross, and reliques, and forged miracles,*  
 “ to be in high esteem in those days [*p*].” Yet  
 neither the fabulous genius of this age: nor the in-  
 credibility of the miracles, said to have been wrought  
 in it; nor the impertinence, the absurdity, nor the  
 impiety, I may say, of the ends, for which they  
 were wrought, can shock the faith of Dr. *Berriman*;  
 or raise any suspicion of *the miraculousness of facts,*  
 affirmed by the *infallibility* of *Pope Gregory*.

Since the zeal then of these Protestant Guides has  
 now brought us within the very pale of the *Romish*  
 Church, I see nothing, which can stop their pro-  
 gress, from the sixth age, down to the present:  
 from *Pope Gregory, the Great, to Pope Clement,*  
 the twelfth; the last of whom I personally knew,  
 and believe to have been as honest and religious a  
 Pontif, as the first. For each succeeding age will  
 furnish miracles, and witnesses too, of as good cre-  
 dit as those of the sixth. The next supplies a *vene-*

[*p*] Hist. Litterar. Vol. I. p. 547.



*vable Bede*; whose very name carries authority; and whose learning, zeal and purity of faith and manners, were celebrated through the Christian world; yet whose works are filled with miracles, which no man of sense can believe [q]. The eighth age yields a *Damascene*: whose great knowledge and erudition in all the learned sciences, no body, says *Cave*, in his senses can deny: yet he was monstrously credulous, and, as the *Popish* writers themselves allow, abounds with lies [r]. And thus we may proceed, through every following age, to find men of the same character; eminent for their learning, zeal and piety; yet all of them still carrying on the same frauds, down to *the Perrons, the Baronius's, the Bellarmines, and the Huetius's*, of these later times; whose names are full as venerable, and testimonies as credible, as any of the more ancient.

From these premises, it is evident, that the forged miracles of the fourth century, must necessarily taint the credit of all the later miracles, down even to the present age. For they depend as it were upon each other, as the parts of one uniform series, or chain,

[q] Vid. Bed. de Vita & miraculis Sancti Cuthbert. Op. Historic. Ed. Cantab, p. 229.

[r] Cave ibid. p. 624.



so that where-ever we draw out a link, all the rest which hang upon it, must of course fall to the ground. Let us consider then in the next place, what light the same forgeries will afford us, in looking backwards also into the earlier ages, up to the times of the Apostles.

And first, when we reflect on that surprizing confidence and security, with which the principal Fathers of this fourth age have affirmed as true, what they themselves had either forged, or what they knew at least to be forged; it is natural to suspect, that so bold a defiance of sacred truth could not be acquired, or become general at once, but must have been carried gradually to that height, by custom and the example of former times, and a long experience of what the credulity and superstition of the multitude would bear.

Secondly, this suspicion will be strengthened, by considering, that this age, in which Christianity was established by the civil power, had no real occasion for any miracles. For which reason, the learned among the Protestants have generally supposed it, to have been the very æra of their cessation: and for the same reason, the Fathers also themselves, when they



were disposed to speak the truth, have not scrupled to confess, *that the miraculous gifts were then actually withdrawn, because the Church stood no longer in need of them* [s]. So that it must have been a rash, and dangerous experiment, to begin to forge miracles, at a time, when there was no particular temptation to it; if the use of such fictions had not long been tried, and the benefit of them approved and recommended by their ancestors; who wanted every help, towards supporting themselves under the pressures and persecutions, with which the powers on earth were afflicting them.

Thirdly, If we compare the principal Fathers of the fourth, with those of the earlier ages; we shall observe the same characters of zeal and piety in them all, but more learning, more judgement, and less credulity in the later Fathers. If these then be found, either to have forged miracles themselves; or to have propagated, what they knew to be forged; or to have been deluded so far by other people's forgeries, as to take them for real miracles; (of the one or the other of which, they were all un-

[s] This will be particularly shewn in the course of my following argument.

questionably



questionably guilty) it will naturally excite in us, the same suspicion of their predecessors; who, in the same cause, and with the same zeal, were less learned, and more credulous, and in greater need of such arts for their defence and security.

Fourthly, As the personal characters of the earlier Fathers give them no advantage over their Successors; so neither does the character of the earlier ages afford any real cause of preference, as to the point of their integrity, above the later. The first indeed are generally called, and held to be *the purest*: but when they had once acquired that title, from the authority of a few leading men, it is not strange, to find it ascribed to them implicitly by every body else, without knowing or inquiring into the grounds of it. But whatever advantage of purity those first ages may claim in some particular respects, is certain, that they were defective in some others, above all, which have since succeeded them. For there never was any period of time in all Ecclesiastical History, in which so many *rank Heresies* were publicly professed [*t*] nor in which so many

[*t*] The learned, I think, have reckoned about ninety different Hæresies, which all sprang up within the three first centuries.

*spurious*



*Spurious books* were forged and published by the Christians, under the names of Christ, and the Apostles, and the Apostolic Writers, as in those primitive ages: several of which forged books are frequently cited and applied to the defence of Christianity, by the most eminent Fathers of the same ages, as true and genuine pieces, and of equal authority, with the Scriptures themselves [u]. And no man surely can doubt, but that those, who would either forge, or make use of forged books, would in the same cause, and for the same ends, make use of forged miracles.

But the true character of these ages may best be

[u] See Archbishop Wake's Preliminary Discourse to the Genuine Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, p. 89. where he has given us a list of a great part of those spurious pieces, with a short account of each—in which he tells us, *that it would be endless to insist on all the spurious pieces, which were attributed onely to St. Paul; but that the superstitious books, ascribed to St. Peter, viz. his Acts, his Gospel, his Preaching, his Revelations, were of much greater authority even to the times of Eusebius.* [§. 18, 19.] He observes also, that the book called *the Recognitions of St. Clement*, which he takes to be *the most learned, as well as the most ancient of any of those pieces, was not set forth till about the middle of the second Century? and is rejected by Eusebius, as one of those many Impostures, which were even then published under the name of that Saint.* §. 28.

learnt



learnt from one, who lived in the very midst of them, and was himself the chief ornament of them, I mean St. *Cyprian*, who has left us the following account of the state of the Church, just before the *Decian* persecution; about *A. D.* 250, when its discipline, as he says, was corrupted, and its faith almost lost, by the long ease and peace, which it had then enjoyed, for near forty years; during which interval, he tells us, “ that the body of Christians  
 “ studied nothing, but how to increase their patri-  
 “ mony: and forgetting, what the faithful had  
 “ done, either in the times of the Apostles, or what  
 “ they ought to do at all times, had no other pas-  
 “ sion, but an insatiable ardor, of enlarging their  
 “ fortunes. That there was no true devotion in the  
 “ Priests, no sound faith in the ministers: no mercy  
 “ in their works, no discipline in their manners:  
 “ that the men destroyed the comeliness of their  
 “ beards, and women of their faces, by paint and  
 “ false arts: their eyes also, so finished by the hand  
 “ of God, were adulterated; and their hair stain-  
 “ ed with colors, not their own. That the simple  
 “ were deluded, and the brethren circumvented  
 by craft and fraud. That it was common, to con-  
 tract



“ tract marriages with unbelievers : and to prosti-  
 “ tute the members of Christ to the Gentiles : and  
 “ to swear not onely rashly, but falsely : to contemn  
 “ their rulers with an insolent pride ; to speak a-  
 “ gainst them with spite and rancour ; and to quar-  
 “ rel among themselves, with an obstinate hatred.  
 “ That great numbers of the Bishops, who ought  
 “ to be an example and lesson to the rest, contemn-  
 “ ing their divine Stewardship, made themselves the  
 “ stewards of secular affairs ; rambling about into  
 “ other people’s provinces ; and seeking out the  
 “ markets of traffic and gain ; and instead of re-  
 “ lieving their hungry brethren in the Church,  
 “ were eager onely, to heap up money ; to seize  
 “ people’s lands by treachery and fraud ; and to  
 “ increase their stock by exorbitant usury [*x*].”

This is the picture of those ages, which people  
 affect to call the *purest*, as it was drawn from the life,  
 by the ablest Master of the times, which he describes :  
 and tho’ the character of the drawer must oblige us  
 to believe, that it bore a great likeness to the origi-  
 nal, yet it is so far from giving us any idea of purity

[*x*] De Lapsis. p. 170. Ed. Rigalt.



or perfection, that if it had been drawn, even for our own times, we might justly think the coloring too coarse, and the features charged beyond the truth.

Now from all these considerations taken together, it must, I think, be allowed, that the forged miracles of the fourth century give us just reason, to suspect the pretensions of every other age both before and after it. My argument would be much the same, if it were grounded on the allowed forgeries of any later age. Dr. *Chapman*, who defends the miracles of the fifth century, declares, *that there were some of these later instances, as public, as clear and as well attested, as any in the earlier ages; and by an evidence, equal to that, by which most of the ancient miracles are supported* [y]. Dr. *Berriman*, in his defence of a particular miracle near the end of the same century, insists, *that it cannot be discredited, without shaking the whole faith of History, and rejecting all accounts of miracles, except those of the Scriptures* [z]. And so far I agree with them both, and own their defence to be true; that the earlier

[y] Miscellan. Tracts, p. 170, 175.

[z] Sermon. p. 327.



miracles rest on no better foundation, nor are supported by any better evidence, than the later. But then, if these later, after all the confidence of their Advocates, may certainly be discredited, and must consequently be rejected; it follows from their own principles, that the earlier may, with as much reason, be rejected too. Which brings me at last to that general conclusion, which I have undertaken to illustrate; *that there is no sufficient reason to believe, from the testimony of antiquity, that any miraculous powers did ever actually subsist in any age of the Church, after the times of the Apostles.*

But this will be the proper business of the subsequent Treatise, in which, I shall endeavour to evince, by particular facts and testimonies, what this general view of the question, here given, and the reflections naturally arising from it, would previously dispose us to suspect; that the pretended miracles of the primitive Church were all mere fictions; which the pious and zealous Fathers, partly from a weak credulity, and partly, from reasons of policy; believing some perhaps to be true, and knowing all of them to be useful, were induced to espouse and propagate, from the support of a righteous cause.



I have already observed, that many spurious books were forged in the earliest times of the Church, in the Names of Christ and his Apostles, which passed upon all the Fathers, as genuin and divine through several successive ages. Now as the high authority of the Apostolic writings, and the zeal, with which they were sought for by all Churches, was the motive, without doubt, which excited some of the ablest, and most learned of the Christians, to take the pains of forging and vending such books under those false titles; so the great fame and success of the Apostolic miracles, would naturally excite some also of the most crafty, when the Apostles themselves were dead, to attempt some juggling tricks in imitation of them, and by the pretence of a divine power, to impose upon that *simplicity and credulity*, which distinguished the character of those early ages. And [a] when these artful pretenders, by insinuat-  
ing

[a] The Primitive Christians were perpetually reproached for their gross *credulity* by all their enemies. *Celsus* says, that they *cared neither to receive, nor to give any reason of their faith*, and that it was an usual saying with them, *do not examine, but believe only, and thy faith will save thee*. *Julian* affirms, *that the sum of all their wisdom was comprized in this single precept, believe*. The Gentiles, says *Arnobius*, make it  
their



ing themselves chiefly in private houses, or among the ignorant populace, had been able to maintain their ground through the three first centuries, the leading Clergy of the 4th, who were then established by the civil power, and at liberty to apply all arts without reserve to the conversion of the Heathens, understood their interest too well, to part with the old plea of miraculous gifts, which had been found so effectual, to dazzle the senses and possess the minds of the multitude.

This seems to have been the general state of the case in question: and though it may shock the prejudices of many, and clash with the systems, which are commonly entertained; yet it will be found, I dare say, to be true, or at least the most probable;

their constant business *to laugh at our faith, and to lash our credulity with their facetious jokes.* Orig. con. Cels. l. 1. p. 8, 9. Greg. Nazian. Invect. 1. Arnob. l. 2. p. 22, 23.

The Fathers, on the other hand, defend themselves by saying, that they did nothing more on this occasion, than what the Philosophers had always done; that *Pythagoras's* precepts were inculcated by an *Ipse dixit*, and that they had found the same method useful with the vulgar, who were not at leisure to examine things; whom they taught therefore *to believe, even without reasons*: and that the Heathens themselves, tho' they did not confess it in words, yet practised the same in their acts. *Ibid.*

and



and as such, the most useful also, to the real Defence of the Christian cause. For, as far as miracles can evince the divinity of a religion, the pretensions of Christianity are confirmed by the evidence of such, as of all others on record, are the least liable to exception, and carry the clearest marks of their sincerity; being wrought by Christ and his Apostles, for an end so great, so important, and so universally beneficial, as to be highly worthy of the interposition of the Deity; and wrought by the ministry of mean and simple men, in the open view of the people, as the testimonial of that divine mission, to which they pretended; and delivered to us by eye-witnesses, whose honest characters exclude the suspicion of fraud, and whose knowledge of the facts, which they relate, scarce admits the probability of a mistake. This is the genuine ground on which Christianity rests; the history of our Saviour's doctrine and miracles, as it is declared and comprized within the canon of the Holy Scriptures. Whenever we go beyond this, we weaken it's foundation, by endeavouring to enlarge it; and by recurring to an evidence less strong and of doubtful credit, take pains only, to render a good cause suspected, and

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expose



expose it to the perpetual ridicule of the Sceptics and Freethinkers.

Should our Infidels then be disposed, to make themselves merry with the miracles of a *Symeon Stylites*, or any other crack'd-brain monk of the 4th or 5th century, there is no reason for Dr. *Chapman*, to be so angry with them [b]: let us suffer them to laugh on, and even laugh with them ourselves; and by throwing out an empty tub to their sport, secure the vessel itself from their attacks. Or should the Romanists, on the other hand, pretend to urge us with their miracles, and to shew the succession of them from the earliest ages, we have no reason to be moved at it, but may tell them without scruple, that we admit no miracles, but those of the Scriptures; and that all the rest are either justly suspected,

[b] This *Symeon*, (who acquired the name of *Stylites*, by a most extravagant whim, which he took, of spending the best part of his life on the top of a pillar, six and thirty cubits high) was a mad, enthusiastic Monk of the 5th Century, to whom many monstrous and superstitious acts are ascribed, by the Ecclesiastical writers, as the effects of a divine inspiration; all which Dr. *Chapman* most strenuously and zealously defends, against the raillery of the Author of Christianity as old as the Creation. See his *Miscell. Tracts*, p. 165. §.



or certainly forged. By putting the controverſy on this iſſue, we ſhall either diſarm them at once, or if they perſiſt in the diſpute, may be ſure to convict them of fraud and impoſture: whereas by granting them but a ſingle age of miracles, after the times of the Apoſtles, we ſhall be entangled in a ſeries of difficulties, whence we can never fairly extricate ourſelves, till we allow the ſame powers alſo to the preſent age.

And in truth, it has always been considered, as a fundamental principle of the Reformation, *that the Scriptures are a compleat rule both of faith and manners; and as such are clear also and intelligible, in all fundamental points, to every private Christian.* In this, all Protestant Churches agree, how much soever they may differ in any other article: and if this be true, then whatever be the characters of the ancient Fathers, or whatever they may have taught, and practised in any age of the Church, is a matter wholly indifferent, and makes no part in the religion of a Protestant: and consequently, no difference of judgement with regard to those Fathers, ought to give any cause of offence or hatred among the members of that communion. For if the Scriptures are suffi-

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cient,



cient, we do not want them as guides; or if clear, as interpreters. Every one therefore may enjoy his opinion of them, with the same liberty, as of any other writers whatsoever, with this caution onely; that an esteem of them is apt to carry us too far, and has actually carried many into great and dangerous errors: whereas the neglect of them cannot be attended with any ill consequence, since the Scriptures teach every thing, that is necessary, either to be believed or practised.

I cannot illustrate this principle so effectually, as by the following words of the excellent *Chillingworth*, who, of all men, best understood the real grounds of the controverfy, between the Protestants and the Papists.

“ The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of  
 “ Protestants. Whatsoever else they believe besides it,  
 “ and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences  
 “ of it, well may they hold it, as a matter of opinions,  
 “ but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they,  
 “ with coherence to their own grounds, believe it  
 “ themselves, nor require the belief of it of others,  
 “ without most high and most schismatical pre-  
 “ sumption. I, for my part, after a long, and



“ (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the  
 “ *true way to eternal happiness*, do profess plainly,  
 “ that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot,  
 “ but on this rock only. I see plainly, and with my  
 “ own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes;  
 “ Councils against Councils; some Fathers against  
 “ others; the same Fathers against themselves; a  
 “ consent of Fathers of one age, against a consent  
 “ of Fathers of another age; the Church of one age,  
 “ against the Church of another age: Traditive in-  
 “ terpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there  
 “ are none to be found. No tradition, but only  
 “ of Scripture, can derive itself from the fountain,  
 “ but may be plainly proved, either to have been  
 “ brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that  
 “ in such an age, it was not in. In a word, there  
 “ is no sufficient certainty, but of Scripture only,  
 “ for any considerate man to build upon, &c.”

But tho' this doctrine of the sufficiency of the  
 Scriptures be generally professed through all the re-  
 formed Churches, yet it has happened, I know not  
 how, in our own, that it's Divines have been apt on  
 all occasions, to join the authority of the primitive  
 Church, to that of sacred writ; to supply doctrines  

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from



from the ancient Councils, in which the Scriptures are either silent or thought defective; to add the Holy Fathers, to the College of the Apostles; and by ascribing the same gifts and powers to them both, to advance the primitive traditions, to a parity with Apostolic precepts.

Thus the late Dr. *Waterland*, who was supposed to speak the sense of our present Rulers, seldom appeals to the Scriptures in his controversial writings, without joining antiquity to them, or the authority of *the three first centuries at least*, that *golden age of Christianity*, as he calls it [c]. He declares, “ that the true interpretation of Scripture, cannot  
“ run counter, in things fundamental, to the judge-  
“ ment of the first and purest ages: that to depre-  
“ ciate the value of Ecclesiastical Antiquity, and to  
“ throw contempt on the primitive Fathers, is to  
“ wound Christianity through their sides [d]: and  
“ that Christ never sits so secure and easy on his  
“ throne, as with these faithful guards about him [e];  
“ and he concludes his elaborate treatise on *the use*  
“ *and value of Antiquity*, in these words.

[c] Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 426.

[d] Ibid. p. 395.

[e] Ibid. 396.



C                   INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

“ The sum of what I have been endeavouring  
 “ through this whole chapter is, that Scripture and  
 “ Antiquity (under the conduct of right reason) are  
 “ what we ought to abide by, in settling points of  
 “ doctrine. I have not put the case of Scripture and  
 “ Antiquity interfering, or clashing with each  
 “ other; because it is a case, which will never ap-  
 “ pear in points of importance, such as this is, which  
 “ we are now upon. However, as to the general  
 “ case, we may say, that those two ought always  
 “ to go together, and to coincide with each other :  
 “ and when they do so, they stand the firmer in  
 “ their united strength: but if ever they clash, or  
 “ appear to clash, then undoubtedly there is an er-  
 “ ror somewhere, like as when two accountants vary  
 “ in casting up the same sum, &c [f].”

Here we see Antiquity joined as a necessary and inseparable companion to the Scripture, and put even upon a level with it, by this eminent Advocate of the Christian Faith. But since this seems to be a flat contradiction to the principles of the Reformation, and dangerous to the general credit and interests of

[f] Ibid. 465.



the Protestant religion, it may be worth while to consider a little, from what particular motives and circumstances, so inconsistent a practice should happen to prevail more remarkably in this, than in any other Protestant Church.

Our first and principal Reformers, in the reign of *Henry* the VIIIth, had not the power, to carry the Reformation so far, as they desired; nor to make such changes in the old worship, as put them under a necessity of discarding the authority of the primitive Fathers; but on the contrary, were obliged against their wills, to comply still with many rites and doctrines, which had no other foundation, but in that authority; which therefore, in those circumstances, they were forced to assert and defend. For how much soever they might be disposed, to abolish such rites, and the authority too, on which they stood, they were restrained by the will of an arbitrary Prince, who would not suffer them, to take the least step but by his immediate direction, and from his high conceit of his Theological learning, gave the law even to his Bishops, in all the religious disputes of those days: and whose chief view after all was, to banish rather the power, than the religion of the Pope, out of his realm. In



In the next reign of *Edward the sixth*, tho' the same reforming Bishops found themselves at liberty, to carry on their great work to it's full perfection, yet for the sake, either of their former conduct, and prejudices; or to preserve a character of constancy; and to give the less scandal to the Clergy, who still generally favoured the old forms; they endeavoured, as far as they were able, tho' sometimes by forced and unnatural constructions, to justify all their proceedings, by the example and usages of the ancient Fathers.

On the accession therefore of *Queen Mary*, and the sad catastrophe, which ensued, when the same Reformers, now doomed to be Martyrs, and especially *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, (two Fathers of the Protestant Church, as truly venerable, as Christianity perhaps has to boast of, since the times of the Apostles;) when these, I say, were brought out of their prisons, on pretence of holding public disputations, but in truth, to be exposed onely to the scoffs and contumelies of their cruel enemies; and when they had solidly evinced the truth of their doctrines, and baffled all the sophistry of their opponents, by the clear and unanswerable testimonies of the Scriptures,  
it



it grieves us after all, to see them laboring and gravelled, at a passage of *Chrysoftom*, or *Ambrose*, or *Hilary*, &c; and giving their adversaries an occasion of triumph, by submitting to an authority, which was nothing to the purpose, and which in those unhappy circumstances, they were neither at liberty to reject, nor yet able to reconcile to their cause.

Queen *Elizabeth*, who next succeeded, and finally established the Reformation, affected to retain more pomp and splendor in the external part of religion, than many of her chief Divines approved; who, in compliance however with her humour, submitted to several things, which they hoped in time to get rid of [g]. Her view was, to moderate the prejudices

[g] In the Preamble of the Will of *Edw. Sandys*, Archbishop of *York*, who died *A. D.* 1588. there is the following passage relating to the rites and ceremonies of the Church, as they were then settled by public Authority.

“ I am persuaded, that such, as are now set down by public Authority—are no way either ungodly or unlawful, but may with good  
 “ conscience, for order and obedience sake be used.—So I have ever  
 “ been persuaded, that some of them be not so expedient for this  
 “ Church, but that they may better be disused by little and little, than  
 “ more and more urged. As I do easily acknowledge, that our  
 “ Ecclesiastical polity may in some points be bettered—So I do ut-  
 “ terly dislike all such rude platforms, &c.”

of



of the Popish clergy ; and to reconcile them by degrees to the new settlement, by leaving in it an outward shew, and some resemblance of the old. From the same principle, a reverence was still kept up to Antiquity ; and appeals made on both sides, to the primitive Fathers and ancient Councils, by the Professors of the new, as well as of the old doctrines : which practice has been followed ever since, by the greatest part of our leading Churchmen. But from the little success which it has had, or ever can have, in our controversies with the Papists, it is evident, that it cannot be considered in any other light, but as a vain ostentation of learning, and an impatient zeal, to repel that charge of ignorance and contempt of primitive Antiquity, with which the Protestant Churches are constantly reproached by the Romanists.

In the two following reigns, the Popish interest began to raise it's head again in *England*. *James* the First was a mere School-Divine, fond of theological disputes ; and tho' he wrote against the Papists, yet *being afraid of them*, as Bishop *Burnet* says, *always acted for them* [b]. And *Charles the First's* Queen,

[b] See Bishop *Burnet's* History of his Times, Vol. I. p. 11, 12.



who was a zealot to that religion, used all her power with the King, which was very great, to support and propagate it's credit in the Kingdom, and to suspend the rigor of the laws against it. “ By the  
 “ King's connivence, says the learned Dr. *Heylin*,  
 “ and the Queen's indulgence, the Popish faction  
 “ gathered not only strength, but confidence;  
 “ multiplying in some numbers about the Court,  
 “ and resorting in a more open manner to the Mas-  
 “ ses at *Somerſet* House; where the *Capuchins*  
 “ had obtained a Chappel and Convent [*i*].” The  
 leading Churchmen also, from a compliance with  
 the principles of the Court, and an abhorrence of  
 those of the Puritans, seemed to have formed that  
 senseless project of a reconciliation with *Rome*, and  
 made considerable advances towards it, by giving  
 such an interpretation to the doctrines and form to  
 the discipline of our Church, as might invite all  
 moderate Papists, to join with them in it's com-  
 munion. But this compliance had no other effect,  
 nor ever can have, than to weaken the Protestant  
 cause, and to furnish it's enemies with the greater

[*i*] See Life of Archbishop *Laud* by Dr. *Pet. Heylin*. Par. 2. l. iv.  
 p. 337.



power and means to oppress it. Nor did they fail to make their full advantage of it; by representing it, “ as a proof of the fickle and unsettled state of  
 “ the *English* Church; that it was grown sick, as  
 “ it were, and weary of itself, and could find no rest  
 “ in the novelties, which it had embraced, but was  
 “ returning apace to it’s old principles, and resuming  
 “ many of the rites and doctrines, for which it had  
 “ forsaken the Church of *Rome*.” All this was urged with great force against our *Chillingworth*, by that subtil Jesuit, Mr. *Knot*; and exemplified by him in many particulars, which the learned Dr. *Heylin*, who was perfectly acquainted with the ecclesiastical principles of that age, and a strenuous espouser of them, declares to be true, in the following words, drawn from his *Life of Archbishop Laud*.

“ If you will take the character of the Church of  
 “ *England*, says he, from the pen of a Jesuit, you  
 “ shall find him speaking, among other falsehoods,  
 “ these undoubted truths; *viz.* that the Professors  
 “ of it, they especially of greatest worth, learning,  
 “ and authority, love temper and moderation; that  
 “ the doctrines are altered in many things; as for  
 “ example, The Pope not Antichrist; Pictures, free-  
 “ will,



“ will, predestination, universal grace, inherent righte-  
 “ ousness; the preferring of charity before know-  
 “ ledge; the merit, or reward rather of good works;  
 “ the thirty nine articles seeming patient, if not am-  
 “ bitious also of some catholic sense; that their  
 “ Churches begin to look with a new face; their  
 “ walls to speak a new language; and some of their  
 “ Divines to teach, that the Church hath authority  
 “ in determining controversies of faith, and inter-  
 “ preting the Scriptures; that men, in talk and writ-  
 “ ing, use willingly the once fearful names of Priests  
 “ and Altars, and are now put in mind, that for the  
 “ exposition of Scripture, they *are by Canon bound*  
 “ *to follow the Fathers.*—So far the Jesuit, says he,  
 “ may be thought to speak nothing but truth. [k].”

It is needless to descend to the later reigns; or to  
 observe, how far the discipline and principles of  
*Archbishop Laud* were adopted again at the Restora-  
 tion; or what credit they still obtain with some of  
 the principal Clergy of our own times; since this  
 can hardly escape the notice of all, who pay any  
 attention to Ecclesiastical affairs. But there is

[k] See Ibid. p. 238. and the Life also, of Mr. *Chillingworth* by  
 Monsieur Des Maizeaux. p. 113. Not. (AA.)



another circumstance, that I must not omit to mention, as it is peculiar to our Church, and from Queen *Elizabeth's* time down to our own, has had no small influence on it's principles and practice, and which will always keep up amongst us a full respect to Ecclesiastical antiquity. I mean those unhappy dissensions among the Protestants of this nation, which have split them into different sects and separate communions. For in these disputes, which wholly turn on points of discipline, and external forms of worship, as the authority of the Fathers, whatever weight it ought to have, is mostly on the side of the established Church, so the Church will always be disposed to support that authority, which helps it to depress a set of men, who, tho' agreeing with it in essentials, and dissenting only about things indifferent, are yet more odious, than the Papists themselves, to all the zealous advocates, and warm admirers of the primitive Fathers.

These seem to have been the chief reasons, which from the time even of our reformation, have advanced the credit of Ecclesiastical antiquity to an higher pitch in this Kingdom, than in any other Protestant country. Which same principles, by the encouragement,



ment, which they have generally received from our Governors, are now carried, as we have seen, to an heighth, that must needs alarm all serious Protestants, as they have no other tendency, nor can have any other effect, but to throw us again into the arms of the *Romish* Church. For I have long been of opinion, that the success, which their Missionaries have ever found in this Island, and which of late has been more particularly complained of, is chiefly owing, to those high notions of the primitive discipline, and that great reverence for the ancient Fathers, which are entertained and propagated by a great part of our Clergy. For by agreeing with the Romanists thus far, and joining with them in a common appeal to primitive antiquity, we allow all, which they can fairly draw from it, to be sound and orthodox; and though in the end, they may not perhaps gain every thing, which they aim at, yet they will be sure always, to come off with great advantage.

Mr. *Chillingworth* himself is a memorable example of this truth: who, in his account of the several motives, which induced him to embrace the *Romish* faith, mentions the two following;

“ Because,



“ Because, if any credit may be given to as credible records, as any are extant, the doctrine of Catholics hath been frequently confirmed, and the opposite doctrine of Protestants confounded, with supernatural and divine miracles.

“ Because, the doctrine of the church of *Rome* is conformable, and the doctrine of Protestants contrary, to the doctrine of the Fathers, even by the confession of Protestants themselves : I mean those Fathers, who lived within the compass of the first six hundred years ; to whom Protestants do very frequently and very confidently appeal [l].”

These seem to have been the principal arguments, which abused this great man, as he expresses it, and hurried him into the Church of *Rome*. *Silly Sophisms*, as he afterwards calls them, *grounded on mistakes and false suppositions, which he unadvisedly took for granted* [m]. Till upon a clear view of the errors, into which they had drawn him, he perceived, that the means could not be pure, when the end was so corrupt, and found no other way of

[l] See Pref. to *Charity maintained*. §. 43. in *Chillingworth's Works*, seventh Edition.

[m] See *ibid.* §. 42.



retrieving his mistake, and becoming Protestant again, but by discarding those fallacious records, and fictitious miracles, which had seduced him, and committing himself to the sole guidance, and infallible authority of the holy Scriptures. On this foundation, he has built the most solid and rational defence of the Protestant cause, which has ever been offered to the public since the Reformation. Yet our Champions of these days are employing all their skill, to demolish what he had built, and to adopt again into the system of our faith, all that he had thrown out of it; all the nonsense, the superstition, and the pious frauds of the primitive ages; nor will they allow us even to be Christians, but on those very principles, which must finally make us Papists.

The design of the present treatise, is to give some check to the current of this zeal, and to fix the religion of Protestants, on it's proper basis, that is, on the sacred Scriptures; not on the authority of weak and fallible men, the detection of whose errors, and the suspicion of whose frauds would necessarily give a wound to Christianity itself; which yet in reality, is no more concerned or affected by the characters



acters of the ancient, than of the modern Fathers of the Church. But to declare my opinion in short on the real value of those primitive writers, I freely own them to be of some use and service on several accounts.

1st, In attesting and transmitting to us the genuine books of the holy Scriptures. Yet this is not owing to any particular sanctity or sagacity of those ancient times, but to the notoriety of the thing, and the authority, with which the books themselves were received from their first publication, in all Churches: whence they have since been handed down to us, in the same manner, as the works of all other ancient writers, by the perpetual tradition of successive ages, whether pure or corrupt, learned or unlearned.

2dly, Their more immediate and proper use, is, to teach us the doctrines, the rites, the manners, and the learning of the several ages, in which they lived: yet as witnesses onely, not as guides: as declaring, what was then believed, not what was true; what was practised, not what ought to be practised: since their works abound with instances of foolish, false and dangerous opinions, universally maintained and zealously propagated by them all.



Lastly, Their very errors also afford an use and profitable lesson to us: for the many corruptions, which crept into the Church in those very early ages, are a standing proof and admonition to all the later ages, that there is no way of preserving a purity of faith and worship in any Church, but by reviewing them from time to time, and reducing them to the original test and standard of the holy Scriptures.

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## P O S T S C R I P T.

AFTER I had finished this Introductory treatise, and was preparing to send it to the press, I happened to meet with an Archidiaconal charge, delivered to the Clergy at a visitation, by the same learned Dr. *Chapman*, whom I have had frequent occasion to mention, in the course of my argument. And since this charge is of a singular kind, and bears some relation to the subject of the present inquiry, with regard both to *Popery* and *Primitive Antiquity*, the reader, I hope, will excuse me, if I detain him here a while, with a few short remarks upon it.

The Archdeacon enters directly into the matter of his speech ; and instead of congratulating with his reverend brethen, on their deliverance from the *late rebellion*, drops but a slight hint on that, as the prelude onely to *another plot*, of a more dreadful and fatal kind which he is in hast to communicate ; the last effort of *subtil Jesuits*, who seeing every other  
method



*method baffled and ineffectual, resolved to try a new, though bold expedient for their Church; more big, he says, with pest and confusion, than all the former devices of their party against us; striking decisively at the very root of the Reformation, and at the basis of all protestant Churches; and secretly working, at this very time, incredible mischief against our whole religion [a]. Then as to the Leader in this Plot, he describes him like another Catiline; furnished with every great talent, proper for the purpose; an head acute and prolific; learning extensive and various; language dogmatical and lively; a zeal never destitute of address, and length of days, attending constant studies and vivacity of genius: in short, with every art, to draw every creature; Papist and Protestant; zealot and freethinker, into his scheme [b.]*

After such an exordium, one cannot help figuring to himself what a surprize, so strange a piece of news must needs excite in this reverend Assembly, to find themselves exposed again so unexpectedly, to the effects of so direful a conspiracy; and what an impatience it would create, to hear the rest, and to learn, by

[a] See pag. 1, 2, 3.

[b] Pag. 11, 12, 18, &c.



what arts and instruments, this calamity was to be brought upon them; which the Archdeacon proceeds to disclose in the following manner:

That *there were certain Loyolites in France, who had assumed of a sudden a new character, and blazed out most fastidious Hypercritics: that these had entered into a vow, to deprive us of all our learning and religion at once, and by one desperate furious push, to stab the protestant cause to the heart, with the admired spirit of incredulity and freethinking: that their method of doing it was; to make all the world believe, that the ancient writers of Greece and Rome, were either figments, or worthless triflers; and by that means, to confound and dissipate all our notions in Chronology, History, Laws, usages, doctrines ecclesiastical and prophane, together with the genius and vitals of all the dead languages: that, in the execution of this design, they had already gone so far, as to reproach Thucydides and Xenophon very tartly, with modern Gallicisms and suspicious phraseologies; and had superciliously lashed all the rest; Diodorus, Polybius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Livy, Justin, Suetonius, Quintilian, Tacitus, Plutarch,*  
2 *Athenæus,*



Athenæus, Dion Cassius, *with multitudes of others, as mere counterfeit Romances; the works of recent Sophists, Impostors, and Fabulators* [c].

And lest any one should interrupt him here, and ask; how *the protestant cause could be ruined and our whole religion overturned*, by the loss onely of these *Pagan writers*, he clears up that doubt in the following words, by declaring; that this blow, *how daring soever, was but the introduction to the fatal stroke, which was to insue; for that the Clements, the Chrysostoms, the Jeroms, and the Austins, were to fall the next in this massacre; and the ancient Councils themselves, both general and provincial, would not long survive them* [d.]

This is the substance of his plot, as it is set forth by himself. For if we *could penetrate the very marrow*, as he says, or, in a metaphor still more elegant, *the very vitals of the dead languages themselves*, we could not find any words, so well suited to his subject, or so adapted, to spread wonder and amazement through an Assembly, as his own. As to the

[c] See pag. 3, 4, 5.

[d] Page 6.



success of the plot, he represents it every where, as most easy and probable. For the Papists would favour it of course, as it could not fail of reducing all Christendom under the absolute power of *Rome*; and *the Protestants, among whom a fantastical passion for novelties, and a brisk giddy spirit of Pyrrhonism was rising very fast* [e], would rejoice at any blow given to ecclesiastical history and the Scriptures, and readily give up even their favourite Virgils and Horaces, &c. on condition onely, that the Jeroms might be sacrificed at the same time [f].

Now whatever surprize the first opening of this speech might give, either to the hearer or reader, the conclusion, I dare say, will give as great, to find *this crazy projection*, as he calls it, which he has been dressing up with such solemnity and laboured pomp of words, as a most desperate plot of the Romish Church, to be nothing at last but the stale and senseless whim of a single old Jesuit, formed by no concert or confederacy with any set of men in the world, and published about forty years ago without any other effect whatsoever, than of being laughed

[e] Page 12.

[f] Page 22, 23.



at ever since by all men of sense, and particularly contemned at *Rome*, as I have been certainly informed, as the mere delirium of a doting Critic.

One would not easily conceive, at the first thought, what should put it into this Archdeacon's head, to think of alarming the Provincial Clergy, at this time of day, with the vain terrors of such an exploded and obsolete tale. But his scheme was artfully laid, and the time exactly hit by him. He saw, that a *Panic* was spread over the land; that people's heads were filled with nothing, but conspiracies and Popish invasions; that this was the moment, to make a figure with his plot, and if the discovery was postponed, the merit of it would be lost. *He struck in roundly* therefore, as he expresses it, *and like a true man of craft, with this taste and turn of the age* [g]; and snatched the opportunity of displaying his abilities before his reverend brethren, and while he was rousing all their fears, of administering comfort to them at the same time, by shewing; what a champion they had got to defend them; that the old Jesuit himself could not outdo him, in those very

[g] See page 12.



talents of his, which he had been enumerating; *the acuteness of his prolific head; the extent of his various learning; the force of his dogmatical language:* and that the Freethinkers were nothing to him, even in their own arts, and the management of those *everlasting arms of theirs, in which their strength lay; the alertness of their sneers; their affectation of appearing significant in erudition, and their fluent pompous shew of some depth in letters [b].*

But surely, no *Archidiaconal Charge* was ever more learnedly trifling, or pompously absurd than this. He confesses, that this conceit of the Jesuit raised so general an outcry against it, among the *Papists themselves, that he was obliged to recant it, as soon almost as it was divulged; that his own Society of the Jesuits published a formal protestation against it [i]; and that the learned of all the other Orders both in France and Italy, sharply declared their abhorrence of it [k].* Yet this despicable project of a cloistered visionary, conceived so many years ago, retracted by himself, censured by his own Order, and abhorred by all the other Orders of *France and*

[b] See page 22, 23.

[i] (Note †).

[k] Pag. 20.

*Italy,*



*Italy*, is here puffed and dressed out by our Arch-deacon, in an Assembly of English Clergy, as a most dreadful plot, spreading it's infection far and wide, threatening ruin to our whole religion, *fire and sword to all Protestants* [l].

In opening the evidences of this plot, he declares from his own knowledge, *that it was certainly begun, and is carried on to this day, with art and success; and is assisted also by a favourable concurrence of circumstances in this very age* [m]: *that one great man in France had loudly proclaimed a very high esteem for the author: that another person at Amsterdam had the confidence to suppose gravely, even in print, that the Jesuit's new system would bear a debate among the learned, and by degrees gain a strong, if not the ablest party to it's side* [n]: and if any farther proof be required, he assures us, *that though it may justly seem so extravagant and chimerical, as to make some good men believe it incapable of doing any mischief, yet he can prove, on the contrary, that it has already spread a taint too far:*

[l] Pag. *ibid.*

[m] See pag. xi.

[n] Pag. 19.



*among some, for catholic advantages, among others, for want of knowing that secret, or from passionate biasses to their coins, or to favour their Pyrrhonism [o].*

The reader will be apt to wonder here again, why our Archdeacon is not more explicit and particular in declaring his proofs, in a cause, which, of all others, seems to want them the most. *He knows, that the plot is carried on with success to this day; and can prove, he says, that it has spread a taint too far:* yet after he has prepared us, to expect the history and progress of the infection, and what particular persons it has tainted in this and that nation; he drops all that at once, as if there were some latent sore in it, too tender for him to touch. But it is not very difficult to guess at the reason: it is his great regard for certain good friends of his, whom he is loth to impeach, as accomplices in this *Jesuitical plot*, which yet he must necessarily do, whenever he is forced to speak out; I mean the *Tunstalls* and the *Marklands* of our own country:



who, with that same *malignant spirit against the ancients*, of which he talks [p], have been lately making the same *desperate furious push*, in this very protestant land, to deprive us of the works of Cicero, by adding them to the Jesuit's list of *counterfeit romances*, and shewing them to be *the fragments of those same busy Sophists and recent Fabulators*. For of all the learned in this kingdom, there are none, who, like the *Loyolites of France*, have ventured, to assume that new character, of *blazing and fastidious Hypercritics*, or have pushed their protestant *Pyrhonism* so far, as they.

Yet after all, which I have been saying of the Archdeacon's Speech, I must do him the justice to own, that there are many observations occasionally interspersed in it, both exceedingly curious, and entirely new. I shall just give one of them, as a specimen of the rest; by which he informs his reverend brethren, *that the real necessities of learned authors, in these times of ours, are extremely great; nay, almost infinitely so, beyond any thing, which the*

[p] Page. 17. Note [+].



*multitude can imagine [q.]* This is a discovery so recondite, and remote from vulgar apprehension, that it could not possibly be made by any, but himself. For, though his modesty would fain conceal it, he is but drawing his own picture, under the character, which he gives of *those great lights and pillars of Protestantism, whom he proposes to the Clergy as patterns of their studies: men, who spent their whole lives in the pursuit of erudition, penetrated the very marrow of all the learned languages, traversed, with the same zeal, every ancient, and monument they could find, had all antiquity before them in one grand comprehensive view, and attained to that abounding richness in learning, which rendered them the glories of their age, and a scourge and terror to any bold superficial pretenders, who should offer to impose upon the public any mischievous sophistries or chicane of science [r].* For, how could any man know, the real necessities of such *deep scholars*, as these, if he himself was not as profound, as they? or how indeed can any one else, reach even the sense of so deep a discovery; for as to those *bold and super-*

[q] See pag. 26.

[r] Pag. 27, 28.



*ficial pretenders*, whom he justly derides, for skimming onely the surface of literature, *and contenting themselves, as he tells us, with a few select authors, the most eminent, and elegant in each class* [s]; they would be apt to pronounce at once, that there is no sense at all in it.

But, if I may presume to offer my opinion, the sense of it, I think, will be found clear and good by a due attention to the context; in which the Archdeacon, having first taken occasion to declare, *that our Church is far inferior to the Romish in the provision of emoluments for the clergy*, artfully introduces his observation, by way of complaint, or petition, as it were, to the public, on behalf of himself, and all the other learned authors, among the Clergy, that, whereas their learning, in these protestant days, is infinitely superior, to what it was in the Popish, yet our Governors do not consider, that *their real necessaries* are increased to them likewise, in the same proportion. For though he has not given any reasons, to confirm this, yet the truth



of it may be demonstrated by a known and memorable fact. For instance; *Erasmus*, an *Author*, competently *learned*, for those Popish times, was supplied with all *real necessities*, and a large overplus besides, from one single benefice, conferred upon him by an *Archbishop of Canterbury*: Our Archdeacon, on the contrary, in these protestant times, holds the same benefice, which *Erasmus* then held, with a second still better, and the profits of an Archdeaconry into the bargain, yet out of *the infinite superiority of his learning*, wants the addition still of more preferment, *to supply his infinite want of real necessities*.

But I am drawn insensibly too far, and wasting too much time in pointing out the solemn trifles, and elaborate nonsense of this strange speech. My chief purpose, in taking notice of it, was of a more serious kind; to shew, by the example of this very performance, to what poor shifts this *Defender of the primitive monks, and their miracles*, will naturally be reduced, whenever he finds it expedient, to give a public testimony of his zeal against *Rome*; and while he pretends to be fighting against  
Popery,



Popery, how he will be driven, by the force of his principles, to make but a mock-fight of it, a mere theatrical shew, and to combat onely phantasms of his own dressing up.

This, I say, is the necessary consequence of his principles ; of *that superstitious veneration of the primitive Fathers, and that implicit faith in Ecclesiastical History*, which it has been the business of his life and studies, to inculcate. For I have already shewn, by facts and instances produced in this Introductory treatise, how those Divines of our Church, who carry the authority of the Fathers so high, as to make them *the guides and interpreters of our religion*, and who *appeal to them especially in our controversies with the Papists*, preclude themselves of course, from attacking any of those principal corruptions, for the sake of which, the Protestants found it necessary, to separate themselves from the communion of *Rome*. Yet our Archdeacon maintains still, as we have seen, in this speech, that the Ancient Fathers and Primitive Councils, the *Clements*, the *Chrysostoms*, the *Jeroms*, and the *Austins*, are the very bulwarks of Protestantism,

and



and the instruments, through which *we may most glaringly expose to every common eye, the unscriptural and unprimitive crudities of the Romish Church* [t].

Now, as in all disputes, the readiest way to find out the truth, is, by reducing them, as far as it is possible, to quæstions of fact, and to the trial of our senses, so in this, I shall refer myself to a fact, which I have endeavoured to exemplify in the foregoing work, with regard to those very Fathers, to whom the Archdeacon appeals; and particularly, to *Chrysostom, Jerom and Austin*; concerning whom, I have there affirmed, and do now again affirm, *that they have all severally taught, and practised, and warmly recommended to the practice of all Christians, certain rites and doctrines, which, upon their authority, and example, are received and practised at this day by the Romish Church, but condemned and rejected by Protestant Churches, as unscriptural, superstitious and idolatrous.* If the Archdeacon allows this fact, every one will see at once, without asking his opinion any farther, on

[t] See pag. 2, &c.

which







promotor of the *monkish life*; and, for the sake of advancing it's credit in the world, wrote the lives of two celebrated Monks; the one called *Paul*, and the other *Hilarion*; in which, after he has invoked *that same Holy Spirit, which inspired the said Monks, to inspire him also with language, equal to the wonderful acts, which he was going to relate*, he has inserted a number of tales, and miracles, so grossly fabulous, as not to admit the least doubt, of their being absolute forgeries. The *Life of Paul* was published the first, and, as we learn from *Jerom* himself, was treated, as a *mere fable*, by the Freethinkers, or *Scyllæan dogs*, as he calls them, of those days [u]. Nor is it considered at this day in any other character, or mentioned by the learned on any other account, than as a proof, of *that passion for fiction and imposture, which possessed the Fathers of the 4th century* [x]. Now whether *Je-*

[u] Unde & nos—cœptum ab eo opus aggredientes, maledicorum voces contemnimus: qui olim detrahentes *Paulo meo*, nunc forte detrahent *Hilarioni*——verum destinato operi imponam manum & *Scyllæos canes* obturata aure transibo. Prolog. in vit. S. Hilarion. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 74.

[x] Quam fuerint quarti seculi Scriptores fabulis dediti, e vita *Pauli Hieronymiana*, ex *Athanasiana Antonii*, &c. intelligimus. Dodw. Dissert. in Irenæum 2. §. LV.



rom forged these tales himself, or propagated what he knew to be forged by others, or whether he really believed them, and published onely, what he took to be true; our Archdeacon may chuse which he pleases, I shall not dispute it with him, since the fact, which I would lay before the reader, and with which alone, we are at present concerned, is uncontestable, *that it was one of the principal views of Jerom's zeal and writings, to recommend to all Christians, as the perfection of the Christian life, a species of monkery, not onely abhorred by Protestants, but, in my opinion, more contemptible and superstitious, than any that is professed at this day in the Church of Rome.*

Again, *Jerom*, as I have intimated also above, wrote a little piece or two against *Vigilantius*, in which he treats him, as a most blasphemous Heretic, and gives us all the particular articles of his hæresy, drawn from *Vigilantius's* own words, to the following effect.

“ That the honors paid to the rotten bones and  
 “ dust of the saints and martyrs, by adoring, kif-  
 “ sing, wrapping them up in silk and vessels of  
 “ gold,



“ gold, lodging them in their Churches and lighting  
 “ up wax candles before them, after the manner of  
 “ the Heathens, were the insigns of Idolatry [*y*].

“ That the Cœlibacy of the Clergy was an Hæ-  
 “ refy, and their vows of chastity the feminary of  
 “ lewdnefs [*z*].

“ That to pray for the dead, or to defire the  
 “ prayers of the dead, was fuperftitious: and that  
 “ the fouls of the departed Saints and Martyrs were  
 “ at reft, in fome particular place, whence they  
 “ could not remove themfelves at pleasure, fo as to be  
 “ prefent every where to the prayers of their vo-  
 “ taries [*a*].

[*y*] Ais *Vigilantium*——os foetidum rurfus aperire, & putorem  
 fpurciffimum contra Sanctorum Martyrum proferre reliquias, & nos,  
 qui eas fufcipimus, appellare cinerarios & idolatras, qui mortuorum  
 hominum Offa veneramur, &c. Vide Hieron. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p.  
 278, 279, 282, &c.

[*z*] Dicit——continentiam, hærefim; pudicitiam, libidinis femi-  
 narium. ibid. p. 281.

[*a*] Ais enim vel in finu Abrahæ, vel in loco refrigerii, vel fubter  
 aram Dei animas Apoftolorum & Martyrum confediffe, nec poffe de  
 fuis tumultis, & ubi voluerint, adeffe præfentes——dicis in libello tuo,  
 quod dum vivimus, mutuo pro nobis orare poffumus; poftquam au-  
 tem mortui fuerimus, nullius fit pro alio ex audienda oratio, &c. ibid.  
 p. 283. &c.



“ That the Sepulchers of the Martyrs ought not  
 “ to be worshipped, nor their fasts and vigils to  
 “ be observed [*b*].

“ That the signs and wonders, said to be wrought  
 “ by their reliques, and at their Sepulchers, served  
 “ to no good end or purpose of religion [*c*].”

These were the *sacrilegious* tenets, as *Ferom* calls them, which he could not *bear with patience, or without the utmost grief* [*d*]; and for which he declares *Vigilantius*, to be a most detestable heretic, venting his foul-mouthed blasphemies against the reliques of the Martyrs, which were working daily signs and wonders. He bids him, go into the Churches of those Martyrs, and he would be cleansed from the evil spirit, which possessed him, and feel himself burnt, not by those wax candles, which so much offended him, but by invisible flames, which would force

[*b*] Qui Martyrum neget sepulcra veneranda, damnandas dicit esse vigilias—ibid. 281.

[*c*] Argumentatur contra signa & virtutes, quæ in Basilicis Martyrum fiunt, p. 285.

[*d*] Fatebor tibi dolorem meum. Sacrilegium tantum, patienter audire non possum, p. 280.

that



that *Dæmon* who talked within him, to confess himself to be the same, who had personated a *Mercury*, perhaps, or a *Bacchus*, or some other of their Gods among the *Heathens* [e]. At which wild rate, this good Father raves on, through several pages, in a strain much more furious, than the most bigotted Papist would use at this day, in the defence of the same rites.

Let our Archdeacon then speak directly to this fact, and tell us, which of these two is acting here the Protestant part, and serving the Protestant cause: whether it be *Jerom* or *Vigilantius*: whether the *Primitive Father*, who, by lies and forgeries, so fiercely maintains the honor of *monkery* and *reliques*; or the *Primitive Heretic*, who, by the Principles of reason and the Gospel, so firmly rejects them.

But he has told us already in his speech, that the *Jeroms* are the men, who must enable us, to ex-

[e] Ingredere basilicas Martyrum, & aliquando purgaberis: invenies ibi multos socios tuos, & nequaquam cereis Martyrum, qui tibi displicent, sed flammis invisibilibus combureris——&c. p. 286.



pose *the unprimitive crudities of the Romish principles and practices* : and he will try again, perhaps on this occasion, what he has tried with success on others, to accommodate these very facts to his own system : and by an art, which he has learnt from *Jerom* himself, will teach us, “ that we ought to “ distinguish between *the dogmatical and the ag-* “ *nistical stile* ; that in the first, indeed, truth is “ the object aimed at, but in the second, nothing “ but victory ; that sincerity therefore is necessary “ in the one, but art onely in the other : that *Je-* “ *rom* was not here dogmatizing, but fighting with “ an enemy ; and in that case, according to his “ custom, not saying what he thought true, but “ what was necessary to his cause, and catching up any “ words, to throw at him, which would best serve, “ to knock him down : then he will cry out again, “ in the same lamentable stile, *that this is not the* “ *first time, that poor St. Jerom has been thus man-* “ *gled and misrepresented* [f] ; that I have sup-

[f] Honoramus autem reliquias Martyrum, ut eum, cujus sunt Martyres, adoremus. Honoramus servos, ut honor servorum redundet ad Dominum ; qui ait ; qui vos suscipit, me suscipit. Hierom. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 279.

“ pressed



“ pressed the very expressions, which would have  
 “ cleared up the matter and justified the purity of  
 “ his principles ; for when *Vigilantius* charges him  
 “ with Idolatry, for worshipping rotten bones, in  
 “ the manner above-mentioned, that I had omitted  
 “ to acquaint the reader, how *Jerom* denies the  
 “ charge, and declares, *that they paid no divine wor-*  
 “ *ship to any thing but to God, that by honoring the*  
 “ *reliques of the Martyrs, they meant to adore him,*  
 “ *whose Martyrs they were ; and gave honor to the*  
 “ *servants, that the honor of the servants might*  
 “ *redound to their Lord, who says, he that receiveth*  
 “ *you receiveth me [g].*” And what is this after  
 all, but the same trifling and evasive distinction,  
 with which the *Romanists* defend the same practices  
 at this day, and shift off that charge of Idolatry,  
 which is urged against them by the Heretical Pro-  
 testants ?

But to pursue this point a little farther. There  
 is another short passage, in the same work of *Jerom*,  
 where he urges *Vigilantius*, in the following man-

[g] See Dr. Chapman's defence of *Jerom*—in *Miscellan. Tracts.*  
 pag. 30, &c.



ner : “ That if it were such a sacrilege, or impiety,  
 “ as *Vigilantius* contends, to pay those honors to  
 “ the reliques of the Saints ; then *the Emperor Con-*  
 “ *stantius* must needs be a sacrilegious person, who  
 “ translated the *holy reliques of Andrew, Luke, and*  
 “ *Timothy, to Constantinople*: then *Arcadius Au-*  
 “ *gustus* also must be held sacrilegious, who translat-  
 “ ed the bones of *the blessed Samuel* from *Judæa*,  
 “ where they had lain so many ages, into *Thrace* :  
 “ then all the Bishops likewise were not onely sa-  
 “ crilegious, but stupid too, who submitted to  
 “ carry a thing, the most contemptible, and no-  
 “ thing but mere dust, in silk and vessels of gold :  
 “ and lastly, then the people of all the Churches  
 “ must needs be fools, who went out to meet those  
 “ holy reliques, and received them, with as much  
 “ joy, as if they had seen the Prophet himself,  
 “ living, and present among them : for the proces-  
 “ sion was attended by swarms of people, from *Pa-*  
 “ *læstine*, even unto *Chalcedon*, singing with one  
 “ voice the praises of Christ, who were yet adoring  
 “ *Samuel* perhaps, and not Christ, whose Prophet  
 “ and Levite *Samuel* was [*b*].”

[*b*] Ergo—Sacrilegus fuit Constantius Imperator, &c. *ibid.* p. 282, 3.



Now let the Archdeacon declare once more, what it is, that we must say and think, *of these translations and processions of holy reliques*, which were solemnized, as *Jerom* here describes them, with such pomp and pageantry of devotion, by the Emperors, Bishops, people, and all Christian Churches of those Primitive times. Must we with *Vigilantius*, call them acts of impiety, superstition and stupidity; or with *Jerom*, treat such an opinion, as blasphemous and hæretical? but whatever answer he may give, we may venture to affirm, without waiting for it, what is sufficient for my purpose, and notorious to all, who have heard or seen, what passes in the *Church of Rome*, that *Jerom's* account of *those primitive reliques and their translations*, is the very form, and pattern, by which *the Romanists translate, receive and venerate their holy reliques*, at this day.

I have now said enough, for the present occasion, concerning the use of the Fathers, and particularly of *Jerom*, with regard to our controversies with the Papists, yet cannot put an end to this Postscript, without adding a word or two, on what the Archdeacon



has farther intimated, with respect to the same *Jerom*, and another sort of enemies, *the Freethinkers*; who make him likewise, as he would persuade us, the particular object of their spleen, and would be glad, as well as the Papists, to get rid of him at any rate. Now if this had been said of the Freethinkers onely, in popish countries, there would have been some sense in it; but as it is here applied, there is certainly none at all. For in the Romish Church, there are many without doubt, who from a freedom of thinking, superior to that of the vulgar, must needs condemn the whole system of their monkery, their worship of Saints and reliques, their holy water, holy oil, crosses, masses, exorcisms, and all their other superstitions; manifestly contrived, to serve purposes merely secular; to support the power, and increase the wealth of the Clergy: and it is natural to imagine, that men, whose scepticism turned chiefly on those rites and practices, might be particularly galled, by the writings of *Jerom*, or the other Fathers, by whose authority, they were all at first propagated, and are still maintained, and forcibly imposed upon them. But the case is widely different in Protestant countries; where we are neither



teized with such fopperies, nor tied down to the authority of the Fathers; and where the Freethinkers consequently have no reason, to fancy themselves specially hurt by any of them; but on the contrary, many obvious reasons, why they should enjoy and rejoice in them all; as affording infinite matter for the sport of sceptical wits; in the credulity, the superstition, the pious frauds, and forged miracles of those primitive times: all which, they have never failed to set forth, as the genuine characters of the Christian Priesthood, and Christian Churches of all ages; and to play them off with all their art, so as to make them bear against religion itself; and they bear indeed in the strongest manner against the religion of *Rome*, as being wholly founded, and still supported by those very arts. But the Protestants stand clear, and unconcerned in the dispute; and have nothing to do, but to look on, and divert themselves with the issue of it. For their religion rests on quite another foot, on the single, but solid foundation of the sacred Scriptures; unmixed with rubbish of ancient tradition, or ancient Fathers; and independent on the characters and writings of any men whatsoever, except of Moses and the Prophets; Christ



Christ and the Apostles. But when Protestant Divines, urged on by an unhappy zeal, or the vanity of displaying their superior learning, think fit, to take up the quarrel, as their own; and when *Archdeacons* especially, and *Lambeth Chaplains*, come forth, with a sort of oracular authority, to defend those primitive frauds and forgeries, and declare the cause of the Fathers, to be the common cause of all Christians; then the affair indeed becomes serious; for this adds a real force and sting to the railleries of the Sceptics; turns their slight cavils, into grave objections, and points them directly against Protestantism itself.



F I N I S.







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A  
FREE INQUIRY  
INTO THE  
MIRACULOUS POWERS,

Which are supposed to have subsisted in the

CHRISTIAN CHURCH, &c.

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У П Т О В

ИЗДАНИЕ

Второе

САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГ



A N

# I N Q U I R Y

Into the MIRACULOUS POWERS, &c.

**I** NOW procede, according to my promise, to a more precise and accurate Discussion of the argument of the *Introductory Discourse*, and to open all the particular proofs, which induced me finally to embrace it, with that freedom and impartiality, which becomes every ingenuous and disinterested inquirer after truth: and, that I may lay the whole question before the reader in the clearest light, I propose to observe the following method.

I. To draw out, in their proper order, all the principal testimonies, which relate to the miraculous gifts of the Church, as they are found in the writings of the Fathers, from the earliest ages, after the days of the Apostles. Whence we shall see, at one view, the whole evidence, by which they have hitherto been supported.

II. To throw together all, which those Fathers also have delivered, concerning the condition of the persons who are

A

said



said to have been indued with those gifts, and to have wrought the miracles, to which they appeal.

III. To illustrate the particular characters and opinions of the Fathers, who attest those miracles ; so as to enable us to determine with more exactness, what degree of credit may be due to their testimony.

IV. To review all the several kinds of miracles, which are pretended to have been wrought, and to observe, from the nature of each, how far the credibility of them may reasonably be suspected.

V. To refute some of the most plausible objections, which have hitherto been made by my antagonists, or which the prejudices and prepossessions of many pious Christians may be apt to suggest to the general turn of my argument.

I. In collecting all the facts and testimonies, which relate to the present argument, from the earliest antiquity, after the days of the Apostles, our first thoughts are carried of course to the *Apostolic* Fathers, that is, to those, who had lived and conversed with the Apostles, and who, by their special appointment, were ordained to succede them in the Government of the Church. For as there are several of this character, whose writings still remain to us, *St. Barnabas*, *St. Clemens*, *St. Ignatius*, *St. Polycarp*, *St. Hermas*, so it is  
2
natural



natural to expect, that, in these valued remains, the History of the miraculous gifts, which are so much celebrated by the writers of the New Testament, should be carried on still in the same manner by these their immediate successors, through the next generation. For if any such gifts had been actually subsisting in their days, it is highly probable, that men of their eminent zeal and piety, who had seen the wonderful effects of them, under the management of the Apostles, and must themselves have possessed a large share of them, would have made some appeal or reference to them, in their circular epistles to the Churches, as their predecessors had done, for the honor of the Gospel, and the credit of their own ministry. But instead of this, it is remarkable, that there is not the least claim or pretension, in all their several pieces, to any of those extraordinary gifts, which are the subject of this inquiry ; nor to any standing power of working miracles, as residing still among them, for the conversion of the Heathen world. The whole purpose of their writings is, to illustrate the excellence and purity of the Christian Doctrine ; and the whole power of their ministry seems to have lain, in the innocent and amiable character of their lives, and in the pious, charitable, and fervent strain of their pastoral exhortations.

They speak indeed in general, of certain *spiritual Gifts*, as abounding among the Christians of that age : yet these cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean any thing more, than the *ordinary gifts and graces* of the Gospel, *faith, hope and charity ; the love of God and of man ;* which they all re-



commend in the warmest terms, and appear to have possessed in the highest degree. *Archbishop Wake* however, who has translated their works into *English*, says, that, *in all probability, they were indued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that there are sufficient indications of it in their writings* [1]: “ which he endeavours to confirm, not by any  
 “ facts or express testimonies, drawn from themselves, but by  
 “ inferences onely or conjectures, grounded on a supposed frequency of those indowments in that age, and the communication of them, as he says, to much lesser and  
 “ worser men ; on the sanctity of their lives, and the greatness of the stations, to which they were called by the  
 “ Apostles ; and on the accounts of them, transmitted to  
 “ us by their Successors : from all which he concludes,  
 “ that they were not onely instructed by persons inspired,  
 “ but were themselves also in some measure inspired too, or  
 “ indued with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost [2].”  
 But whatever gifts of this sort they may be supposed to have possessed, it is certain at least, as the same Translator of their works takes occasion to inculcate, that their indowments were *far inferior, both in their kind and degree, to those of their Predecessors, the Apostles* [3].

But the learned *Mr. Dodwell*, a writer of a more sanguin complexion, peremptorily declares, from the mere title or

[1] See Prelim. Disc. c. x. §. 11, 12.

[2] *Ib.* §. 18, 23.

[3] *Ib.* §. 11, 23.



address of *St. Ignatius's* Epistle to the Church of *Smyrna*, that miracles subsisted in great abundance in those days ; because that Church is there stiled, *blest with every good gift, and wanting in no good gift* [1]. Yet these words, as they are explained by the context, manifestly signify nothing more, than the ordinary gifts of the Gospel, *Faith and Charity* : for the whole passage runs thus : *To the Church of God the Father, and of the beloved Jesus Christ, which God hath mercifully blest with every good gift, being filled with Faith and Charity, so as to be wanting in no good gift* [2]. In another Epistle likewise of *St. Ignatius*, to the *Romans*, written on his journey towards *Rome*, whither he was going to suffer martyrdom, there are these words ; “ I am willing to die “ for God, unless you hinder me. I beseech you, that you “ shew not an unseasonable good will towards me : suffer “ me to be food for the wild beasts, by whom I shall attain “ unto God : for I am the wheat of God, and shall be ground “ by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the “ pure bread of Christ, &c. [3]” From which words, the same learned person again infers, *that the prayers of the primitive Christians had the power to disable the wild beasts from assaulting the Martyrs, who were exposed to them in the Am-*

[1] Differtat. in Iren. 11. § VII.

[2] Ἡλεημένη ἐν παντὶ χαρίσματι, πεπληροφορημένη ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ, ἀνυσερήτῳ οὐσῃ παντὸς χαρίσματι. Epist. ad Smyrn.

[3] Παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς, μὴ εὐνοία ἀκαιρος γένησθε μοι. ἄφετε μὲ θηρίων εἶναι βορᾶν. &c. Ad Rom. c. IV.



*phitheatres* [1]. Yet the passage itself has not the least reference to prayers, or to any thing miraculous, but to the ordinary endeavours and intercession of the Christian brethren at *Rome*, who offered to use their interest to preserve him from that cruel death, which he was then going to suffer : to which sense it is expressly restrained, in the relation of his Martyrdom, written by those who accompanied him in this very journey, and were present at his death : by whom we are told ; “ that the brethren, who came out to meet him  
 “ on his approach to that city, and were zealous for his  
 “ safety, *undertook to appease the people*, so that when he  
 “ came to be exposed to the wild beasts in the Amphitheatre, *they should not desire his destruction* : but the Saint  
 “ over-ruled, *and commanded them to be quiet* [2].” And to the same sense also Dr. *Cave* has interpreted it, in his *Life of this Saint*. “ The Christians at *Rome*, says he, came out to  
 “ meet and entertain him — and when some of them did  
 “ but intimate, that possibly the people might be taken off  
 “ from desiring his death ; he expressed a pious indignation,  
 “ intreating them to cast no rubs in his way, that might  
 “ hinder him, now he was hastening to his crown [3].”

[1] Ex Epistola ad Romanos intelligimus, Martyribus nonnullis datum, ne possent in eos bestię immissę sævire. Proinde illud a *Romanis* enixissimis precibus contendit, ne eorum orationibus id in sua causa contingeret. Diff. Iren. 2. §. xxx.

[2] See Relat. of Martyrd. of St. *Ignat.* §. 9, 10, 12.

[3] See *Cave's* Lives of the Saints, Vol. I. p. 105. §. 8.



And in truth, all the other expressions of these Fathers, which are commonly understood to signify the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, may be interpreted more rationally and more agreeably to the general turn of their writings, to denote onely the ordinary graces of the Gospel, faith and charity; which they constantly extoll, as superior to all other perfections; as *things wonderfull and admirable*; and *the peculiar gifts of God*: [1] nay in some places, they seem even to disclaime all gifts of a more extraordinary kind. Thus *Polycarp*, in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, says; “ these things, my brethren, “ I took not the liberty to write to you of myself, concern- “ ing righteousness, but you before encouraged me to it. For “ neither I, nor any other such as I am, can come up to the “ wisdom of the blessed and renowned *Paul*. And in the “ same Epistle he declares, that it was not granted to him, “ to practise that, which is written in the Scripture; *be an- “ gry and sin not, and let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*” [2] St. *Ignatius* also, in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, says;

[1] Clem. 1. Epist. ad Corinth. c. 49, 50. it. Ignat. Ep. ad Ephes. xiv.

Thus when St. *Clemens* tells the *Corinthians*, that *they had all been blessed with a large effusion of the Holy Spirit*. [ § 11.] yet this effusion, as it appears from the context, was not of a kind which conferred any extraordinary powers, but onely pious affections and good inclinations. And in the same Epistle, where he is exhorting them to submit themselves, one to another, according to *the gift*, which had been bestowed upon each: he means nothing more by *that gift*, or *charisma*, as he calls it, than the different talents, abilities, and advantages, whether natural or acquired, of *strength, wisdom, riches, continence, &c.* by which Providence thinks fit to distinguish the different characters of men. § 38.

[2] Ep. ad Philipp. c. III. it. c. XII.

“ these



“ these things I prescribe to you, not as if I were some body  
 “ extraordinary, for tho’ I am bound for his name, I am  
 “ not yet perfect in *Jesus Christ*, but now I begin to learn,  
 “ and speak to you, as to fellow disciples. For I ought to  
 “ have been stirred up by you in faith, in admonition,  
 “ &c. [1].

This same Saint indeed, in one or two of his Epistles, seems to intimate, that the knowledge of certain events had been communicated to him by the Spirit. Thus, in his Epistle to the *Philadelphians*, speaking of the earnest exhortations, which he had given them, to unity and submission to their *Bishops, Priests, and Deacons*, he says; “ some people  
 “ suspected, that I was acquainted before hand with the di-  
 “ visions among you: but he is my witness, for whom I am  
 “ bound, that I did not know it from any human flesh, but  
 “ the spirit declared it, speaking thus, *do nothing without your*  
 “ *Bishop, &c.*” [2] from which Dr. *Wake* takes occasion to infer, *that he was indued with a large Portion of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost*: [3] yet I do not find, that any other Commentator has ventured to build any thing miraculous or supernatural upon it.

It is related likewise of *Polycarp*, in the ancient narrative of his martyrdom, “ how in the time of that persecution, in  
 “ which his life was particularly sought for by the Heathen

[1] Ad Ephes. c. III.

[2] Ibid c. VII.

[3] See Prelim. Treat. c. x. §. 13.



“ Magistrates, he withdrew himself from *Smyrna*, by the  
 “ advice of his friends, into a little village, where he spent  
 “ his days and nights in prayer, with a few, who accompa-  
 “ nied him ; and as he was praying, a vision was offered to  
 “ him, three days before he was taken, in which he saw  
 “ his pillow on fire: whereupon, turning presently to his  
 “ companions, he said prophetically, I must certainly be  
 “ burnt alive.” The same narrative calls him also a *Pro-*  
*phetic teacher* ; and declares, *that every word, which he uttered,*  
*had either been fulfilled, or would be fulfilled.* [1] Whence  
 some later writers have affirmed, that he was indued with a  
 spirit of prophecy, and foretold every thing, that was to hap-  
 pen to him. But the foresight of his death, and the man-  
 ner of it, in the time of a cruel persecution, when his person  
 was particularly hunted from village to village, as the princi-  
 pal and destined sacrifice, may reasonably be considered as the  
 effect of common prudence, without recurring to any thing  
 miraculous.

Here then we have an interval of about half a century, the  
 earliest and purest of all Christian Antiquity after the days of  
 the Apostles, in which we find not the least reference to any  
 standing power of working miracles, as exerted openly in the  
 Church, for the conviction of unbelievers ; but on the con-  
 trary, the strongest reason to presume, that the extraordinary  
 gifts of the Apostolic age were by this time actually withdrawn ;

[1] Vid. Martyr. Polyc. c. v, xvi.



and the Gospel left to make it's way by it's own strength, and the authority of those credentials, and original miracles, with which Christ had furnished it, as an effectual security of it's success and triumphs over the powers of the earth. Yet before we take leave of these Apostolic Fathers, it may be proper to observe, for the prevention of unnecessary cavils; that, if from the passages referred to above, or from any other, which may be found in them, it should appear probable to any, that they were favored on some occasions, with *extraordinary illuminations, visions, or divine impressions*, I shall not dispute that point with them, but remind them only, that the gifts of that sort were merely personal, granted for their particular comfort, and reaching no farther than to themselves; and do not therefore in any manner affect or relate to the question now before us.

But if the Apostolic writers have left us in the dark, with regard to our present argument, their Successors, it must be owned, as far as their authority reaches, have cleared it from all obscurity, by their strong, explicit, and repeated attestations of many extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers, which were constantly and publicly exerted in the Christian Church, through each succeeding age.

*Justin Martyr*, who is supposed to have written his first Apology within fifty years after the days of the Apostles, says,  
 “ There are prophetic gifts among us at this day, and  
 “ both men and women indued with extraordinary powers  
 “ by



“ by the Spirit of God [1].” And he frequently appeals,  
 “ to what every one might see with his own eyes, in every  
 “ part of the world, and particularly in *Rome*, in the case of  
 “ persons possessed with Devils ; who were cured and set  
 “ free, and the Devils themselves baffled and driven away by  
 “ the Christians, adjuring or exorcising them in the name of  
 “ *Jesus*, when all other Exorcists and Inchanters had tried in  
 “ vain to help them [2].”

*Irenæus*, who was contemporary with *Justin*, but wrote  
 somewhat later, and lived much longer, affirms ; “ that all,  
 “ who were truly disciples of *Jesus*, receiving grace from him,  
 “ wrought miracles in his name, for the good of mankind,  
 “ according to the gift, which each man had received : some  
 “ cast out Devils, so that those, from whom they were eject-  
 “ ed, often turned believers, and continued in the Church :  
 “ others had the knowledge of future events, visions, and  
 “ prophetical sayings : others healed the sick by the imposition  
 “ of hands : that even the dead had been raised, and lived af-  
 “ terwards many years among them : that it was impossible,  
 “ to reckon up all the mighty works, which the Church per-  
 “ formed every day, to the benefit of nations ; neither deceiv-  
 “ ing, nor making a gain of any, but freely bestowing, what

[1] Παρὰ γὰρ ἡμῖν καὶ μέχρι νῦν προφητικὰ χαρίσματα εἰσιν, &c. Καὶ παρ’  
 ἡμῖν εἰσὶν ἰδεῖν καὶ θηλείας καὶ ἄρσενας χαρίσματα ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχον-  
 τας. Dial. par. 2. p. 315, & 330. Edit. Thirlb.

[2] Apolog. 2. p. 116. vid. etiam. p. 196, 303, 320, 21. &c.



“ it had freely received [1].” And as to the particular miracle of *raising the dead*, he declares it, “ to have been frequently performed on necessary occasions; when by great fasting, and the joint supplication of the Church of that place, the spirit of the dead person returned into him, and the man was given back to the prayers of the Saints [2].” And again, “ we hear many, says he, in the Church indued with prophetic gifts; speaking with all kind of tongues; laying open the secrets of men for the public good; and expounding the mysteries of God [3].

*Theophilus*, Bishop of *Antioch*, who lived in the same age with *Irenæus*, speaking of the *evil and seducing Spirits*, which used to inspire the Poets and Prophets of the Heathen world, says; “ the truth of this is manifestly shewn; because those, who are possessed by such Spirits, are sometimes exorcised even at this day by us, in the name of the true God; when these seducing Spirits confess themselves to be the same Dæmons, who had before inspired the Heathen Poets [4].

*Tertullian*, who flourished towards the end of the second, and died in the beginning of the third century, challenges the Heathen Magistrates, “ to call before their tribunals, any person possessed with a *Devil*; and if the evil spirit, when ex-

[1] *Advers. Hæres.* l. 11. c. LVII. p. 188. Edit. Oxon. it. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 5. c. 7.

[2] *Adv. Hæres.* l. 2: c. LVI. p. 186. it. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. *ibid.*

[3] *Ibid* l. 5. c. VI. p. 406.

[4] *Ad Autolyc.* l. 21. p. 87. c. ad calcem *Oper. Just. Mart. Par.* 1636.



“orcised by any Christian whatsoever, did not own himself  
 “to be a Devil, as truly, as in other places, he would falsely  
 “call himself a God, not daring to tell a lie to a Christian,  
 “that then they should take the life of that Christian: and  
 “what is more manifest, adds he, than this operation;  
 “what more convincing than this proof [1]?” In another  
 place, “there is a Sister, says he, among us, indued with  
 “the gifts of revelations, which she suffers in the Church,  
 “during the time of divine service, by an ecstasy in the spi-  
 “rit: she converses with Angels, and sometimes also with  
 “the Lord: sees and hears mysteries: and knows the hearts  
 “of some, and prescribes medicines to those, who want  
 “them [2].

*Minucius Felix*, who is supposed to have written in the be-  
 ginning of the third century, addressing himself to his Hea-  
 then friend, in his Dialogue, called *Octavius*, says; “the  
 “greatest part of you know, what confessions the Dæmons  
 “make concerning themselves, as oft as they are expelled by  
 “us out of the bodies of men, by the torture of our words,  
 “and the fire of our speech. *Saturn* himself, and *Serapis*,  
 “and *Jupiter*, and the rest of them, whom you worship,  
 “constrained by the pain, which they feel, confess what they

[1] Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris, quem Dæmone agi constat.  
 Jussus a quolibet Christiano loqui spiritus ille, tam se Dæmonem confitebitur  
 de vero, quam Deum alibi de falso — quid isto opere manifestius? quid hac  
 probatione fidelius? Apologat, c. 23.

[2] De Anima. § 9.



“ are: nor in this, do they tell us a lie, tho’ it be to their  
 “ own shame, especially when some of your people are  
 “ present. Believe them therefore to be Dæmons, from their  
 “ own testimony, and true confession. For being adjured  
 “ by the true and onely God, they unwillingly and wretch-  
 “ edly betray their uneasiness in the bodies of men; and ei-  
 “ ther fly out instantly, or vanish gradually, in proportion  
 “ as the faith of the patient, or the grace of the agent assists  
 “ towards the cure [1].

*Origen*, who lived at the same time with *Minucius*, tho’ something younger, declares; “ that there remained still  
 “ among the Christians of his days, the manifest indications  
 “ of that Holy spirit, which was seen in the shape of a  
 “ Dove. For they drive away Devils, says he; perform  
 “ many cures; foresee things to come; according to the  
 “ will of the divine word: and tho’ *Celsus* and the *Jew*, who  
 “ is introduced by him, will make a jest, of what I am going  
 “ to say, I will say it nevertheless; that many people, as it  
 “ were against their wills, have been brought over to Chri-  
 “ stianity, by the Spirit giving a sudden turn to their minds,  
 “ and offering visions to them either by day or by night; so  
 “ that instead of hating the word, they became ready even  
 “ to lay down their lives for it. I have seen many examples  
 “ of this sort; and should I onely set down such of them,  
 “ as were transacted in my presence, I should expose myself

[1] *Minuc. Octav. p. 23. ad Calcem Edit. Cyprian. per Rigalt. Paris.*



“ to the loud laughter of the unbelievers, who imagine that  
 “ we, like the rest, whom they suspect of forging such  
 “ things, are imposing our forgeries also upon them : but  
 “ God is my witness, that my sole purpose is, to recom-  
 “ mend the religion of *Jesus*, not by fictitious tales, but by  
 “ clear and evident facts [1].”

In another place, he says ; “ that miracles began with  
 “ the preaching of *Jesus*, were multiplied after his ascen-  
 “ sion, and then again decreased ; but that, even in his  
 “ days, some remains of them continued with a few, whose  
 “ souls were cleansed by the word, and a Life conformable  
 “ to it [2].” Again ; some, says he, in proof of a mira-  
 “ culous power received through faith in Christ, heal the  
 “ sick, by invoking the name of God over them, and of  
 “ *Jesus*, with a recital of some story of his life. I myself  
 “ have seen many so healed in difficult cases ; loss of senses,  
 “ madness, and innumerable other evils, which neither men  
 “ nor Devils could cure [3].” Again ; speaking of Devils,  
 “ We are so far, says he, from worshipping them, that by  
 “ prayers and the rehearsal of some passages of the sacred writ,  
 “ we drive them before us, out of men and places, and also  
 “ out of beasts ; for they sometimes attempt to do mis-

[1] Cont. Cels. l. 1. p. 34, 35. Edit. Cant.

[2] Σημεῖα δὲ τῶ ἀγίου πνεύματος καὶ ἀρχαὶς μὲν τῆς Ἰησοῦ διδασκαλίας, μετὰ  
 δὲ τὴν ἀνάληψιν αὐτοῦ πλείονα ἐδείκνυτο, ὕστερον δὲ ἐλάττωνα. πλὴν καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἐστὶν  
 ἰσχυρὰ αὐτοῦ παρ’ ὀλίγοις. &c. ib. l. 7. p. 337. it. l. 2. 62.

[3] Ibid. l. 3. p. 124.



“ chief also to these [1].” Then as to the method of performing this miracle, “ it was not, he says, by any curious, “ magical, or enchanting arts, but by prayer alone, and “ certain plain adjurations or exorcisms, which any simple “ Christian might perform : for even common and illiterate “ laymen were generally the actors in this case [2].” In which no man was more eminent, than one of his own disciples, *Gregory*, called the *Wonder-worker*, who cast out Devils, not only by word of mouth, but even by a *message, or mandatory letter to them* ; as the Ecclesiastical writers have recorded of him [3].”

*Cyprian*, the scholar of *Tertullian*, who wrote about the middle of the third century, speaking of *prophetic visions*, which was the peculiar gift of that age, says ; “ besides “ the visions of the night, even boys among us are filled “ with the Holy Ghost, and in fits of ecstasy, see, hear, “ and speak things, by which the Lord thinks fit to instruct “ us [4].” And describing all the various pranks of the Devils, “ they insinuate themselves, says he, into the bodies

[1] Εἴθ' ὅτε δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ζώων. πολλάκις γὰρ ἐπὶ τῇ λύμῃ καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἐνεργῶσι τινὰ οἱ δαίμονες. Ibid. l. 7. p. 376.

[2] Ὡς ἐπίπαν γὰρ ἰδιῶται τὸ τοιούτον πράττεισι. Ibid. p. 334.

[3] Κακεῖ πρῶτον μὲν λαϊκὸς ὢν, πολλὰ σημεῖα ἐποίησε, νοσούντας θεραπεύων, καὶ δαίμονας δι' ἐπιστολῶν φυγαδεύων. Socrat. Hist. l. 4. 27.

[4] Præter nocturnas enim visiones, per dies quoque impletur apud nos Spiritu sancto puerorum innocens ætas, quæ in exstasi videt oculis, & audit & loquitur ea, quibus nos Dominus monere & instruere dignatur. Epist. ix. Edit. Rigalt. Par.



“ of men, raise terrors in the mind, distortions in the  
 “ limbs, break the constitution, and bring on diseases —  
 “ yet adjured by us in the name of the true God, they pre-  
 “ sently yield, confess, and are forced to quit the bodies,  
 “ which they possessed. You may see them by our com-  
 “ mand, and the secret operation of the divine power, lashed  
 “ with scourges, scorched with fire, tortured by an increase  
 “ of pains ; howling, groaning, begging ; confessing whence  
 “ they came, and whither they go, even in the hearing of  
 “ their own worshippers : and they either fly out immedi-  
 “ ately, or vanish gradually, according to the faith of the  
 “ patient, or the grace of him, who works the cure [1].”  
 In another place, treating again on the same miracle, “ it is  
 “ performed, says he, at this day, so that the Devil is lashed  
 “ and burned and tortured by the Exorcists, with human  
 “ words, but a divine power : and when he promises to go  
 “ out, and to dismiss the men of God, he often deceives,  
 “ and by the same lie of obstinacy and fraud, does what  
 “ *Pharoah* had done before, till he is oppressed by the salu-  
 “ tary water of Baptism [2].

[1] Ibid. De Idolor. vanit. p. 206.

[2] Ibid. Epist. 76. p. 154. The example of *Pharaoh* here alluded to, is explained by him in the following manner : King *Pharaoh* having struggled and persisted in his perfidy, was able to carry on his resistance so far, till he came to the water, where he was subdued and destroyed. For that Sea, as St. *Paul* says, was the Sacrament of Baptism. — And so he shews how the Devils used to act the same part, when adjured by the Christian Exorcists, and continued to afflict the people of God till they came to the water of Baptism.



*Arnobius*, who is supposed to have published his book against the Gentiles, in the year of Christ 303, tells us, “ that Christ used to appear sometimes in those days, to just  
 “ and holy men, not in vain dreams, but in his pure and  
 “ simple form : and that the mention of his name put the  
 “ evil spirits to flight ; struck their prophets dumb ; de-  
 “ prived the Southsayers of the power of answering ; and  
 “ frustrated the acts of arrogant Magicians ; not by the  
 “ terror or hatred of his name, as the Heathens pretended,  
 “ but by the efficacy of his superior power [ 1 ].”

*Lactantius*, the disciple of *Arnobius*, who flourished and wrote about the same time, speaking of those Dæmons or evil spirits, says ; “ that being adjured by the Christians in  
 “ the name of God, they retire out of the bodies of men ;  
 “ and being lashed by their words, as by scourges, confess  
 “ themselves to be Dæmons ; and even tell their names ;  
 “ the same, which are adored in the Temples ; and this  
 “ even in the presence of their worshippers ; yet casting no  
 “ reproach on religion, but on their own honor, because  
 “ it is not in their power to lie either to God, in whose  
 “ name they are adjured, or to the just, by whose voice

[1] Qui justissimis viris etiam nunc impollutis, ac diligentibus sese, non per vana insomnia, sed per puræ speciem simplicitatis apparet. Cujus nomen auditum fugat noxios spiritus. Imponit silentium vatibus. Haruspices inconsultos reddit. Arrogantium Magorum frustrari efficit actiones, non horrore, ut dicitur, nominis, sed majoris licentia potestatis. lib. 1. p. 13. ad Calcem Oper. Cyprian. Edit. per Rigalt.

“ they



“ they are tortured : wherefore after many howlings, they  
“ frequently cry out, that they are scourged and burned,  
“ and are going out instantly [1].”

These are the principal testimonies, which assert the miraculous gifts of the Primitive Church, through the three first centuries : which might be supported still by many more of the same kind, and from the same, as well as different writers, if it were necessary [2]. But these are sufficient for our purpose : and the warmest admirers of those ages, will not scruple, I dare say, to risk the fate of the cause upon the merit of them : for if these cannot command belief, the credit of the miracles in question must sink at once ; since Christian antiquity can furnish no other evidence in their favor, half so strong and authentic as this.

I shall close this first article with a remark or two, which it seems naturally to suggest. It has already been observed, that the silence of all the Apostolic writers, on the subject of these gifts, must dispose us to conclude, that in those days they were actually withdrawn. And if this conclusion be thought to have any weight in it, then surely the pretended revival of them, after a cessation of forty or fifty years, and the confident attestation of them made by all the succeeding Fathers, cannot fail of infusing a suspicion of some fiction

[1] Divin. Institut. lib. 2. c. 16.

[2] See Mr. *Whiston's* Account of the Dæmoniacs, &c. in which he has collected many more testimonies relating to them, to shew, that the gift of curing them continued to the middle of the fourth century.



in the case. For if they did really cease for so long an interval, and at a time, when the Christian cause seemed to want them the most, as being then deprived of it's first and ablest champions, the Apostles, we cannot conceive any reason, why they should afterwards be revived, when the Church, without any such help, had been gathering more and more strength all that while, by its own natural force. But it is remarkable, that as the Church continued to increase in power and credit, so it's miraculous gifts are said to have increased also in the same proportion: for tho' by an increase of power it certainly stood less in need of true miracles, yet by the same power it became more able to reward, and more likely therefore to excite false pretensions to them.

Again, the difference which every one may perceive, between the miraculous gifts of the Apostolic days, and these of the following ages, not onely in the nature, but in the manner also of exerting them, will greatly confirm the suspicion just intimated. The Apostles wrought their miracles on special occasions, when they felt themselves prompted to it by a divine impulse; but at other times, were destitute of that power; as it is evident from many facts and instances, recorded in the New Testament. Agreeably to which, tho' they appeal sometimes, in confirmation of their mission, to the miraculous works, which their Master had enabled them to perform, yet we never find them calling out upon the Magistrates and people, to come and see the mighty wonders, which they were ready to exhibit before their eyes, on all occasions,



occasions, at any warning, and in all places, whenever they thought fit. Whereas this confident and ostentatious manner of proclaiming their extraordinary powers, carries with it an air of quackery and imposture, as it was practised by the primitive wonder-workers; who, in the affair especially of casting out Devils, challenge all the world to come and see, with what a superiority of power they could chastise and drive those evil spirits out of the bodies of men, when no other *Conjurers*, *Inchanters*, or *Exorcists*, either among the Jews or the Gentiles, had been able to eject them.

II. Under this head, I shall briefly lay before the reader; all such notices, as I have been able to draw, from any of the Primitive writers, concerning the persons, who were indued with these extraordinary gifts, and wrought the several miracles, to which they appeal.

Now whenever we think, or speak with reverence, of those primitive times, it is with regard always to these very Fathers, whose testimonies I have been collecting; who have left behind them, in their writings, the genuine specimens of their sanctity and abilities. *Venerable Saints, and eminent lights of the best and purest ages, as Dr. Waterland calls them, and of admirable indowments, ordinary and extraordinary* [1]. And they were indeed the chief persons and champions of the Christian cause in those days; the Pastors, Bishops, and Martyrs of the Primitive Church. Yet none of these *Ve-*

[1] Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 143, 160, 169.



*nerable Saints* have any where affirmed, that either they themselves, or the Apostolic Fathers before them, were indued with any power of working miracles, but declare only in general, “ that such powers were actually subsisting in their days, “ and openly exerted in the Church ; that they had often “ seen the wonderful effects of them ; and that every body “ else might see the same, whenever they pleased :” but as to the persons, who wrought them, they leave us strangely in the dark ; for instead of specifying their names, conditions, or characters, their general stile is, “ such and such “ works are done among us, or by us ; by our people ; by “ a few ; by many ; by our Exorcists ; by ignorant lay- “ men, women, boys, and any simple Christian whatsoever :” but in the particular case of *casting out Devils*, *Origen* expressly says, *that it was performed generally by laymen* [1]. Agreeably to which *Mr. Whiston* declares, “ that “ this gift, which he ranks amongst the greatest of miracles, was wholly appropriated by our Saviour, to the “ meaner sort of Christians, with an exclusion even of the “ Clergy, so that, after the days of the Apostles, none of “ the sacred order ever pretended to it [2].

But of what condition soever the actors were, it is certain, that in the performance of their miracles, they were always charged with fraud and imposture by their ad-

[1] ὡς ἐπίπαν γὰρ ἰδιῶσαι τὸ τοιέτον πρᾶξις. *Con. Cels.* 7. 334.

[2] See his Account of the Dæmoniacs, p. 52, 53. 57.



versaries. *Lucian* tells us, *that whenever any crafty juggler, expert in his trade, and who knew how to make a right use of things, went over to the Christians, he was sure to grow rich immediately, by making a prey of their simplicity* [1]. And *Celsus* represents all the Christian wonder-workers, as mere vagabonds and common cheats, “ who rambled about to “ play their tricks at fairs and markets ; not in the circles “ of the wiser and better sort, for among such they never “ ventured to appear ; but wherever they observed a set of “ raw young fellows, slaves or fools ; there they took care “ to intrude themselves and to display all their arts [2].” *Cæcilius* also calls them *a lurking nation ; shunning the light ; mute in public ; prating in corners* [3].

The same charge was constantly urged against them by all the other enemies of the Christian Faith, *Julian, Porphyry, &c.* of whom *Dr. Waterland* however has taken occasion to declare, *that they had some regard to truth, in what they said, and to public report, and to their own characters* [4]. But as

[1] Ηντοίνυν παρέλθῃ τις εἰς αὐτῶν γόης, ἢ τεχνίτης ἄνθρωπος, ἢ πράγμασι χρῆσθαι δυνάμενος, αὐτίκα μάλα πλῆσι ἐν βραχεὶ ἐγένετο, ἰδιώταις ἀνθρώποις ἐγχανών. *De Mort. Pereg.* T. 2. p. 568. Ed. Var.

[2] Ὁ δὲ γόης ἡμᾶς καλεῖ, ἢ φησιν ὅτι φεύγομεν τῶν χαριεσέων προσηπάδην, ὥς ἐκ ἐτοίμης ἀπαλᾶσθαι, παλεύομεν δὲ τῶν ἀγροικολέων. &c. *Orig. con. Celf.* l. 6. p. 284. vid. it. l. 3. p. 141.

[3] Latebrofa & lucifuga natio ; in publicum muta ; in angulis garrula, &c. *Minuc. Fel.* p. 7.

[4] “ I know not whether *Celsus, Porphyry, or Julian* would have said such “ a thing, in the greatest extremity of their rage. They had some regard to “ truth and to public report, and to their own characters.” *Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin.* p. 426.



this seems to have been an hasty and inconsiderate concession, made to serve a particular point, which he was then urging, that *the ancient Infidels were better men than the moderns*, so I shall lay no stress upon it, but observe onely on the whole, that from these short hints and characters of the primitive wonder-workers, as given both by friends and enemies, we may fairly conclude ; that the celebrated gifts of those ages were generally engrossed and exercised by private Christians, chiefly of the layety ; who used to travel about from City to City, to assist the ordinary Pastors of the Church, and Preachers of the Gospel, in the conversion of the Pagans, by the extraordinary gifts with which they were supposed to be indued by the Spirit of God, and the miraculous works, which they pretended to perform.

And here again, we see a dispensation of things ascribed to God, quite different from that, which we meet with in the New Testament. For in those days, the power of working miracles was committed to none but the Apostles, and to a few of the most eminent of the other disciples, who were particularly commissioned to propagate the Gospel, and preside in the Church of Christ : but upon the pretended revival of the same powers in the following ages, we find the administration of them committed, not to those, who were instructed with the government of the Church ; not to the successors of the Apostles, to the Bishops, the Martyrs, or the principal Champions of the Christian cause ; but *to boys, to women*, and above all, *to private and obscure laymen*, not  
onely



onely of an inferior, but sometimes also of a *bad character* [1]. But if those venerable Saints and Martyrs were not indued with them when living, they had amends made to them when dead, if we can believe the reports of their successors, by a profusion of them on their bones and reliques : which suggests a farther cause of suspecting the faith and judgement of those early ages. For how can we think it credible, that God should withhold his distinguishing favors, from his faithful servants when living, to bestow them on their rotten bones ? or employ his extraordinary power, to no other use, but to perpetuate a manifest imposture in his Church ? since it is to those ancient tales, so gravely attested, of miracles wrought *by the bones of Saints and Martyrs*, that the Church of *Rome* owes all that trade, which she still draws, from the same fund and treasure of her wonder-working reliques : and if we can believe such stories, as they are delivered to us by the Primitive writers, we cannot condemn a practice, which is evidently grounded upon them.

These things, I say, are so strange, as to give just reason to

[1] Νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δι' ἀναξίων ἐνεργεῖν ὁ Θεὸς εἴωθε. Chrysost. T. 3. p. 66. c. Edit. Benedict.

Adjicient præterea multa de auctoritate cujusque Doctoris Hæretici ; illos maxime doctrinæ suæ fidem confirmasse, mortuos suscitasse, debiles reformasse, futura significasse, ut merito Apostoli crederentur. Tertull. De Præscript. Hæreticor. §. 44.

Εκεῖνο δὲ προσθέμεν τῷ λόγῳ, ὅτι οὔτε πᾶς ὁ προφήτεύων, ὅσιος. οὔτε πᾶς ὁ δαίμονας ἐλαύνων. Constitut. Apostol. l. 8. c. 2.

Ut intelligamus, quædam miracula etiam sceleratos homines facere, qualia sancti facere non possunt. August. Oper. T. 6. p. 71.

D

suspect,



suspect, that there was some original fraud in the case; and that those strolling wonder-workers, by a dexterity of juggling, which art, not Heaven had taught them, imposed upon the credulity of the pious Fathers, whose strong prejudices and ardent zeal for the interest of Christianity, would dispose them to embrace, without examination, whatever seemed to promote so good a cause. That this was really the case in some instances, is certain and notorious: and that it was so in all, will appear still more probable, when we have considered, in the next place, the particular characters of the several Fathers, on whose testimony, the credit of those wonderfull narratives depends.

III. The authority of a writer, who affirms any questionable fact, must depend on the character of his veracity and of his judgement. As far as we are assured of the one, so far are we assured, that he does not willingly deceive us; and from our good opinion of the other, we persuade ourselves, that he was not deceived himself: but in proportion as there is reason to doubt of either; there will always be reason to doubt, of the truth of what he delivers. Nay, in many cases, the want of judgement alone, has all the same effect, as the want of veracity too, towards invalidating the testimony of a witness: especially in cases of an extraordinary, or miraculous nature; where the weakness of men is the most liable to be imposed upon; and the more so, as it happens to be joined to the greater piety and simplicity of



of manners. Since this then is the sole rule of determining the measure of credit, which is due to a witness of any strange and questionable facts, I shall apply it to the case before us; and examine what proofs of a sound judgement and strict veracity are to be found in the writings of those Fathers, who attest the miraculous stories, which we are now considering.

As to the Apostolic Fathers, of whom I have spoken above, since they have contributed but little towards the illustration of the present question, and bear no direct testimony in it; or none at least, but what confirms the point, which I am defending; there is no reason to enter into the consideration of their particular characters. Their works, as I have said, are translated into *English*, so that every one may judge of them for himself. They appear to have been men of great piety, integrity, and simplicity: and that is all, I think, which we need to declare of them on this occasion.

*Justin Martyr* comes next, whose genius will best be illustrated by some specimens of it, extracted from his writings. We have seen above, that among the indowments conferred in an extraordinary manner on the Primitive Christians, *the gift of expounding the holy Scriptures, or the mysteries of God*, was reckoned one: and this, as *Justin* frequently affirms, *was granted by the special grace of God to himself* [1]. Let us inquire then, what use he made of this  
divine

[1] Απεκάλυψεν ἔν. ἡμῖν πάντα ὅσα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτῆς  
βενοήκαμεν. Dial. par. 2. p. 352.



divine gift : and if ever he was really enlightened by it, we might surely expect to find the effects of it there, where he is discoursing *on the mystery of the Cross* ; which he declares to be the greatest symbol of power and dominion, and explains in the following manner. “ Consider, says he, all the  
 “ things in the world, whether they could be administered,  
 “ or have any communication with each other, without this  
 “ form of the Cross. The Sea could not be passed, unless  
 “ that trophy called the sail, were preserved in the ship : the  
 “ earth could not be tilled without it : for neither diggers  
 “ nor artificers could do their work, but by instruments of  
 “ this shape. The form of man differs in nothing else from  
 “ other animals, but in the erection of his body, and the  
 “ extension of his arms, and the projection of his nose  
 “ from the forehead, through which respiration is made,  
 “ and which shews nothing else but the figure of the cross :  
 “ in which sense also it is spoken of by the Prophet ;  
 “ *Christ the Lord is the breath before our face* [1].” Upon  
 this passage the very pious and learned Dr. Grabe makes the  
 following remark, which I would recommend to all the zealous admirers of these *venerable Saints* and *purest ages* ; “ *that*  
 “ *the holy Martyr must not be rashly blamed, for an interpreta-*  
 “ *tion so forced and far fetched ; because it was the prevailing*

Οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναμις ἐμοὶ τοιαύτη τις ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ χάρις παρὰ Θεῷ μόνη εἰς τὰ συνιέναι τὰς γραφὰς αὐτῶ ἐδόθη μοι. Ib. p. 258.

[1] Κατανοήσατε γὰρ πάντῃα τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, εἰ ἄνευ τῆ σχήματος τέττα διοικεῖσθαι, ἢ κοινωνίαν ἔχειν δύνασθαι, &c. Apol. 1. p. 82:

“ *custom*



“ custom of that age, to import into the sacred text senses,  
“ which did not belong to it [1].”

Again ; “ Hear, says *Justin*, how Christ, after he was  
“ crucified, fulfilled the symbol of the tree of life in Paradise,  
“ and of all the other things, which were to happen after-  
“ wards to the righteous. For *Moses* was sent with a rod,  
“ to redeem his people : with this rod he divided the sea ;  
“ brought water out of the rock ; and with a piece of  
“ wood, made the bitter water sweet. *Jacob* also with sticks,  
“ made his uncle *Laban*’s sheep bring forth such lambs, as  
“ were to be his own gain, &c. [2].” And so he goes on,  
in this way of allusion, to apply all the sticks and pieces of  
wood in the Old Testament to the Cross of Christ : and  
pursuing the same argument in another place, where he is  
describing the fight of the *Israelites* with *Amalek*, he says,  
“ that when the son of *Nun*, called *Jesus*, led the people on  
“ to battle, *Moses* employed himself in prayer, with his  
“ hands stretched out in the form of a Cross ; that, as long  
“ as he continued in that posture, *Amalek* was beaten ; but  
“ when he remitted any thing of it, his own people  
“ suffered : and that all this was owing to the power of the

[1] Alium autem sensum tradit hoc loco *Justinus*, qui nimis longe quidem  
petitus videtur : nec tamen S. Martyr idcirco temere reprehendendus, quod  
mos istius ævi tam inter Judæos, quam Christianos obtinuerit, sacro textui  
haud innatos sensus sub inferre. Vid. not. (29) ad *Justin.* ibid.

[2] “Οτι δὲ, μετὰ τὸ σταυροθῆναι τῆτον — σύμβολον εἶχε τῶ ξύλῳ τῆς ζωῆς, ὃ  
ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ πεφυλεύσθαι ἐλέλετο, καὶ τῶν γενησομένων πᾶσι τοῖς δικαίοις,  
ἀκέραιε, &c. Id. Dial. p. 2. p. 325, 326.

“ cross :



“ cross : for the people did not conquer, because *Moses*  
 “ prayed ; but because, while the name of *Jesus* was at the  
 “ head of the battel, *Moses* was exhibiting the figure of the  
 “ Cross [1].” It would be endless to run through all the  
 interpretations of the same kind, which are to be found in  
 this Father ; since his works are but little else, than a wretched  
 collection of them : the pure flights of an enthusiastic fancy  
 and heated brain, which no man in his sober senses could  
 mistake for divine revelations. Yet as absurd as they now  
 appear to be, this pious Father insists, that they were all  
 suggested to him from Heaven ; and appeals to the *Jews* them-  
 selves, against whom he was applying them, *whether they*  
*thought it possible for him, to acquire so perfect a knowledge of*  
*the Holy Scriptures, if he had not received from the author of*  
*them, the grace or gift, to understand them* [2]. What credit  
 then can be due to this Father, in the report of other peo-  
 ple’s gifts and inspirations, who was so grossly deceived him-  
 self, or willing at least to deceive others, in this confident at-  
 testation of his own ? Dr. *Cave* tells us, that *Justin* was  
*wholly ignorant of the Hebrew tongue* ; which was the cause of  
 his childish blunders, whenever he meddled with it. “ Every  
 “ one, says he, who has dipped but ever so little into that

[1] Οὐ γὰρ ὅτι, ἕτως ἡύχελθ. Μωσῆς, διὰ τῆτο κρείσσων ὁ λαὸς ἐγίνετο, ἀλλ’  
 ὅτι ——— αὐτὸς τὸ ζῆμεϊόν τῆ σαυρῆ ἐποίει. Ibid. p. 336.

[2] Οἴεσθε ἂν ἡμᾶς πῶτε, ὧ ἄνδρες, νενοηκέναι δυνηθῆναι ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς  
 ταῦτα, εἰ μὴ θελήματι τῆ θελήσαντος αὐτὰ ἐλάβομεν χάριν τῆ νοῆσαι. Dial.  
 par. 2. p. 390.



“ tongue, knows, that *Satan* in the *Hebrew* signifies an ad-  
 “ versary : but see the ridiculous interpretation of *Justin* :  
 “ He is called *Satanas*, says the Martyr ; a name compounded  
 “ agreeably to his nature, of *Sata*, which signifies an Apo-  
 “ state, and *Nas*, a Serpent, &c. [1]” But for a farther  
 illustration of his character, I shall give an instance or two of  
 the doctrines, which he teaches, as orthodox and Apostoli-  
 cal, as well as of the facts, which he asserts, as certain and  
 unquæstionable.

He declares, that all the Christians, who were in all points  
 orthodox, embraced and believed the doctrine of the *millen-*  
*nium* : “ that all the Saints should be raised in the flesh, and  
 “ reign with Christ in *Jerusalem*, enlarged and beautified in  
 “ a wonderful manner for their reception, in the enjoyment  
 “ of all sensual pleasures, for a thousand years before the ge-  
 “ neral resurrection [2].” Which doctrine he deduces from  
 the testimony of the Prophets and of St. *John* the Apostle ;  
 and was followed in it by the Fathers of the second and third  
 centuries : yet the doctrine itself was afterwards exploded, as  
 it well deserved, not onely as absurd and monstrous, but as im-  
 pious and heretical. St. *Jerom* treats it as a mere fable, or

[1] Litterarum Hebraicarum rudem penitus & imperitum fuisse, *Justin*o vi-  
 tio verti non debet, &c. ——— Hinc factum est, ut in Hebræis adeo puerili-  
 ter lapsus sit, exemplum dabo, &c. Cave Hist. Litter. p. 61. Edit ult.

[2] Εγὼ δὲ καὶ εἴ τινας εἰσὶν ὀρθογνώμονες κατὰ πάντα χριστιανοὶ, καὶ σαρκὸς  
 ἀνάστασιν γενήσεσθαι ἐπιστάμεθα, καὶ χίλια ἔτη ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, οἰκοδομηθείσῃ, καὶ  
 κοσμηθείσῃ, καὶ πλεθυνθείσῃ, &c. Dialog. par. 2. p. 313.



*dream of the Jews, and Judaizing Christians.* Yet from the authority of those Fathers, who asserted it, and the credit, which it had obtained with the generality of Christians, he foresaw, as he tells us, *what a furious storm he should raise against himself by that freedom* [1]. The sure fate of all those, who, in any age of the Church, from the earliest times down to the present, have had the virtue and courage to attack any popular error, or reigning superstition.

He asserts another doctrine full as monstrous; “that God  
“having created the world, committed the care of it to  
“Angels; who transgressing their duty, fell in love with wo-  
“men, and begot children on them, whom we call Dæ-  
“mons; who subdued mankind to their power; partly by  
“magical writings; partly by terrors, and punishments;  
“and partly by the institution of sacrifices, fumes, and  
“libations; of which they began presently to stand in need,  
“after they had enslaved themselves to their lusts and pas-  
“sions, &c. [2]” And in another place, “the truth, says  
“he, shall come out; that evil Dæmons of old debauched

[1] Quæ qui recipiunt, mille quoque annorum fabulam & terrenum Salvatoris imperium Judaico errore suscipient — Comment. in Isa. c. 30. Oper. Tom. 3. p. 262. Edit. Benedict.

Ex quo discimus mille annorum fabulam, in qua rursus nuptiæ promittuntur, & cibi & terrenæ vitæ conversatio, abjiciendam. Ib. p. 436.

Ut præfaga mente jam cernam, quantorum in me rabies concitanda fit ibid. p. 478.

[2] Οἱ δὲ ἄγγελοι, παραβάντες τήνδε τὴν τάξιν, γυναικῶν μίξεσιν ἠτλήθησαν, καὶ παῖδας ἐτέκνωσαν, οἳ εἰσιν οἱ λεγόμενοι δαίμονες, &c. Apol. 2. p. 112.



“ women and corrupted boys, and spread terrors among  
 “ men ; who did not examine things by reason ; but seiz-  
 “ ed with fear, and not knowing, that these Dæmons  
 “ were evil spirits, called them Gods, and gave every one  
 “ that name, which they had each taken to themselves. But  
 “ when *Socrates* by true reason endeavoured to expose their  
 “ practices, and draw men away from their worship, they,  
 “ by the help of wicked men, took care to get him put to  
 “ death, as an Atheist and impious person [1].”

He professes likewise the highest regard for certain spuri-  
 ous books, which were published under the names of the  
*Sibyl* and *Hystaspis* ; which he treats with the same reve-  
 rence as the Prophetic Scriptures ; appeals to them as di-  
 vine, and says, that “ *by the contrivance of Dæmons, it*  
 “ *was made a capital crime to read them,* in order to deter  
 “ men from coming at the knowledge of what was good,  
 “ and keep them still in subjection to themselves : which  
 “ yet, adds he, they were not able to effect : for we not  
 “ onely read them freely without fear, but offer them also, as  
 “ you see, to your perusal ; knowing, that they will be found  
 “ acceptable to all [2].” And it is certain, that from this

[1] Εἰρήσειται γὰρ τ' ἀληθές. ἐπεὶ τὸ πάλαιον δαίμονες φαῦλοι ἐπιφανείας  
 ποιησάμενοι, καὶ γυναῖκας ἐμοίχευσαν καὶ παῖδας διέφθειραν. &c. ib. Apol. 1.  
 p. x.

[2] Καὶ Σίβυλλα δὲ καὶ Ὑσασπιδος, γενήσεσθαι τῶν φθαρτῶν ἀνάλωσιν διὰ πυ-  
 ρὸς ἔφασαν. Apol. 1. p. 30.

Καὶ ἐνέργειαν δὲ τῶν φαύλων δαιμόνων, θάνατον ὤρισθη κατὰ τῶν τὰς Ὑσάσπιδος,  
 ἢ Σιβύλλης, ἢ τῶν προφητῶν βίβλος ἀναγινωσκόντων. &c. ib. p. 67.



example and authority of *Justin*, these silly writings were held in the highest veneration by the Fathers and rulers of the Church, thro' all succeeding ages.

*Clemens of Alexandria* supposes them to have been inspired by God, in the same manner as the Prophets of the Old Testament: which he confirms by the authority both of *St. Peter* and of *St. Paul*, whom he cites as appealing to them, for a prediction of the life and character of *Jesus*.

“ For as God, says *Clemens*, out of his desire to save the  
 “ *Jews*, gave them Prophets, so raising up Prophets also to  
 “ the *Greeks*, from their own nation and language, as far as  
 “ they were capable of receiving that good gift of God, he  
 “ separated them from the vulgar, as not onely the Preach-  
 “ ing of *Peter*, but the Apostle *Paul* also declares, speaking  
 “ thus; *take the Greek books into your hands, and look into*  
 “ *the Sibyl, how clearly she speaks of one God, and of the*  
 “ *things to come: then take Hystaspes also and read, and*  
 “ *you will find the Son of God much more clearly and evi-*  
 “ *dently described: and that many Kings shall employ all their*  
 “ *forces against Christ, out of their hatred to him, and to all*  
 “ *who bear his name* [1].”

The

[1] Clem. Alex. Strom. l. 6. p. 761. Edit. Ox. The *Preaching of Peter*, Κήρυγμα Πέτρου, was the title of a spurious book, ascribed to that Apostle: which is often cited as genuine by *Clemens*, *Origen*, and the other Fathers: and was forged probably in the age, immediately succeeding to that of the Apostles. [Vid. Cave Hist. Litt. V. 1. p. 6. it. Grab. Spicil. Patr. T. 1. p. 62.] The passage also cited here from *St. Paul*, was taken from some other spurious piece



The heathens on the other hand charged the Christians with the forgery of these books, and gave the title of *Sibyllists*, by way of contempt, to those, who held them to be divine [1]. Which charge the Fathers constantly denied and treated as a pure calumny [2]: Yet all the Critics of these

now unknown, which then passed for the work of that Apostle. [Vid. Not. ad loc. Clem.] *Hystaspis* is called by *Lactantius*, a most ancient King of the Medes: [l. 7. c. 16.] and by *Ammianus Marcellinus*, the Father of Darius: and is said to have been a master of all the doctrine of the *Magi*. Vid. Amm. Marc. l. 23. c. 6. & Not. Vales.

[1] *Origen* speaking of *Celsus* says; Εἶπε δὲ τινὰς εἶναι καὶ Σιβυλλιστὰς. &c. Con. Cel. l. 5. 272.

[2] *Celsus* having charged the Christians with inserting many blasphemous passages into the verses of the *Sibyl*, *Origen* observes in answer to him, that he had neither produced any passages, so inserted, nor any ancient and correct copies of the verses themselves, which wanted such passages; which he ought to have done, if he had been able. [l. 7. 369.] this indeed was, to put the controversy upon a right foot; by which however, as the learned *Valesius* remarks, *Celsus* might easily have made good his charge, and detected the forgery. [Not. in Euseb. Vit. Constant. p. 700. Edit. Cant.] If he did not therefore produce any old copies, which wanted the passages in quæstion, the reason of it must be, that he either thought it unnecessary, in a case so manifest, or that the books themselves were not easy to be found.

The succeeding Fathers treat the same objection in a manner wholly equivocal and evasive. *Lactantius*, after he has alledged many verses from the *Sibyl*, in which the principal acts and miracles of *Jesus* are circumstantially described, says; “ those, who are confuted by these testimonies, usually fly to this shift, “ of declaring these verses, not to be the *Sibyl*’s, but forged and composed by “ our people: which no man will believe, who has read *Cicero* and *Varro*, and “ the rest of the ancient writers, who make mention of the *Erythræan* and the “ other *Sibyls*, and who were all dead before Christ was born.” [De Ver. Sap.



these days allow the fact to be true, and consider it, as one of the pious frauds of those primitive ages. *There is no man,* says

l. 4. 15.] The four following verses, cited from the *Sibyl* by *Lactantius*, will serve as a specimen of the rest.

Εἰν ἄρτοις ἅμα πέντε καὶ ἰχθύεσσιν δυοῖσιν  
 Ἀνδρῶν χιλιάδας ἐν ἐρήμῳ πέντε κορέσσει.  
 Καὶ τὰ περισσεύοντα λαβὼν μετὰ κλάσματα πάντα,  
 Δώδεκα πληρώσει κοφίνους εἰς ἐλπίδα πολλῶν.

With five loafs and two fishes  
 He will satisfy five thousand men in the desert.  
 Then gathering up all the fragments, which remain,  
 He will fill twelve baskets for the confirmation of many.

*Eusebius* has preserved an *Acrostich*, said to have been taken from the *Erythræan Sibyl*; in which the initial letters of each line compose the following greek words, Ἰησῦς, Χριστὸς, Θεὸς Ὑιὸς, Σωτὴρ, Σταυρός. *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour, Cross*. He tells us however, “that many people, tho’ they allowed “the *Erythræan Sibyl* to have been a *Prophetess*, yet rejected this *Acrostich*, “suspecting it to have been forged by the Christians—but the truth, adds “he, is manifest: and our people have been so exact in computing the times, “as to leave no room to imagine, that the verses were made after the coming “of Christ, and falsely sent abroad, as the predictions of the *Sibyl*. For it is “agreed by all, that *Cicero* had read this poem, which he translated into the “latin tongue, and inserted into his own works.” [Vit. Constant. p. 700. Ed. Cant.] Now the sole ground of this confident assertion is, that *Cicero*, speaking of certain verses, ascribed to the *Sibyl*, which had really been forged by the partisans of *J. Cæsar*, to serve a political design, after he has ridiculed the verses themselves, and the purpose of them, intimates, that they were composed in the form of an *Acrostich*, which was a work of labor and attention, not of madness or ecstasy, and could not therefore come from the *Sibyl*. Div. 2. 54.

St. *Austin* has given us a latin translation of the same *Acrostich*, which he introduces thus; “The *Erythræan Sibyl* has indeed written some things clearly “and



says Dr. Cave, *who does not see, that they were forged for the advancement of the Christian faith* [1]. Some impute the fraud to *Hermas*; some to *Papias*; and others to *Justin* himself. Mr. *Blondel* and Mr. *Dodwell* charge it upon the Heretics, called *Montanists*; but by a gross mistake, as Dr. *Cave* observes, since *Montanus* was not in being, till forty years after *the Sibylline books* were known to the world [2].

*Justin* affirms also that silly story, concerning the *Septuagint version* of the Old Testament, “ That it was made by  
“ seventy Elders sent for that purpose from *Jerusalem* to

“ and manifestly relating to Christ; which I have read in the latin tongue,  
“ tho’ in bad verses, thro’ the unskillfulness of the translator, as I afterwards  
“ understood. For *Flaccianus*, an eminent person, who had been Proconsul;  
“ a man of flowing eloquence and great learning; as we were conversing to-  
“ gether on the subject of Christ, produced a greek book, being the verses, he  
“ said, of the *Erythræan Sibyl*, where he shewed in a certain place, how  
“ the initial letters of each verse were managed so, as to form the words,  
“ *Ἰησοῦς, Χριστὸς* &c. [De Civ. De 18. 23.] But the same Father declares in  
another place, that *there were some, who suspected all those prophecies, which re-*  
*lated to Christ, and passed under the name of the Sibyl, to have been forged by the*  
*Christians.* [ib. c. 46.] Upon which the learned Editor of his works, *Ludovi-*  
*cus Vives*, remarks, *that they could not be forged, because they are cited both by*  
*Laëtantius and Eusebius.* [Not in loc.] Thus a most gross and palpable forgery was  
imposed upon the Christian world, from the very midst of those best and purest  
ages; which tho’ rejected and derided from the beginning by all men of sense  
among the Heathens, yet obtained full credit in the Church, through all ages,  
without any other ground to support it, but the utility of the deceit, and the  
authority of those venerable Fathers, who contrived and attested it.

[1] Hadriano imperante, forsan circa ann. 136. nata videntur. — conficta  
esse, idque in gratiam Christianae fidei nemo non videt. Cave Hist. litt. Vol.  
I. p. 57. Edit. Oxon.

[2] Vid. Cave ib. p. 58. it. Dodwell. Dissertation. Cyprian. 4. § x.



“ *Ægypt*, at the request of King *Ptolemy* : whom that  
 “ King shut up in as many separate cells, and obliged them,  
 “ each to translate the whole Bible apart, and without any  
 “ communication with each other : yet all their several  
 “ translations were found to agree verbatim from the begin-  
 “ ning to the end ; and by that means were demonstrated  
 “ to be of divine inspiration.” And to raise the greater at-  
 tention to his story, he introduces it, by declaring, “ that  
 “ he is not telling us a fable or forged tale ; but that he  
 “ himself had seen at *Alexandria* the remains of those very  
 “ cells, in which the Translators had been shut up [1].  
 But repeating the same story in his Apology, he makes an  
 unhappy blunder, by saying, that *King Ptolemy’s message*, to  
*beg the assistance of those seventy translators*, was sent to Herod,  
*King of Jerusalem* ; whereas *Herod* happened to live about  
 three hundred years later than *Ptolemy* [2]. Dr. *Grabe* en-  
 deavours to excuse *Justin* by the help of a forced criticism,  
 which the ingenious Editor of *Justin’s Apology*, with good  
 reason derides ; since this pious Father was certainly guilty  
 here of that weakness, against which St. *Paul* warned both  
*Timothy*, and *Titus*, of giving too much heed to profane, Jewish,  
 and old women’s fables [3] ; and furnishes a pregnant instance,

[1] Ταῦτα ὁ μῦθος ὑμῖν ὡς ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, εἰδὲ πεπλασμένως ἱστορίας ἀπαγ-  
 γέλλομεν. ἀλλ’ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ γενόμενοι, καὶ τὰ ἴχνη των οἰκίσκων ἐν τῇ  
 Φαρυῇ ἑωρακότες ἐτι σωζόμενα &c. Cohort. ad Græc. p. 14.

[2] Ὅτε δὲ Πτολεμαίῳ ὁ Αἰγυπτίων βασιλεὺς——προσέπεμψε τῷ τῶν Ιε-  
 ραίων τότε βασιλεύοντι Ἡρώδῃ &c. Apol. 1. p. 49. vid. Not. 8, 9.

[3] 1 Tim. iv. 7. Tit. i. 14. See Ant. Van Dale Dissert. de Arist. p. 146.



how easily his prejudices might impose upon him in all other cases of the like nature.

To these specimens of his want of judgement, I might add several more, from his frequent use of *fabulous and apochryphal books*, forged by the first Christians, under the names of the Apostles; and likewise from his false and negligent manner of quoting the genuin Scriptures. Dr. *Grabe* has collected several instances of the first sort [1]; and his learned Editor finds frequent occasion to animadvert upon the second [2].

It will be said perhaps, that these instances shew indeed a weakness of judgement, yet do not impeach the veracity of *Justin*, as a witness of fact. With regard to which, we must call to mind, what is hinted above, that the want of judgement alone may, in some cases, disqualify a man as effectually, from being a good witness, as if he wanted veracity too. For example, *Justin* expressly affirms, *that he had seen the cells, in which the seventy were shut up to the task of translating the Bible*. Now it is certain, that there never were any such cells, nor any such translators: and the best excuse, which can be made for him is, that he was imposed upon by some *Jews* or *Christians* of *Alexandria*, who might shew him some old ruins, under the name of Cells, which his prepossession in favor of the story, owing to his natural

[1] Vid. *Grabe* *Spicileg. Patr.* Tom. 1. p. 14. 327. it. p. 19.

[2] Vid. *Just. Apol.* 1. p. 87. quæ disputat de feris venenosis &c. in deserto. it. p. 92. Not. 6. it. p. 206. Not. 20. it. p. 203. Not. 16. it. Not. 18. p. 327.



credulity and want of judgement, made him take to be really such.

Again, in his Apology, addressed to the Emperor and Senate of *Rome*, he charges them with paying divine honors to the Heretic and Impostor, *Simon*, of *Samaria*, commonly called the *Magician*: and for the truth of his charge, appeals to a Statue, then subsisting in *Rome*, and publicly dedicated to that *Simon* in the Island of the *Tiber*, with this Inscription, SIMONI DEO SANCTO [1]. But it is manifest beyond all reasonable doubt, as some learned men have shewn, that *Justin* was led here into a gross blunder, by his usual want of judgement and knowledge of *Roman* affairs, and his pre-conceived belief of certain fabulous stories, which passed current about this *Simon* among the first Christians [2]; for the Statue and Inscription, to which he appeals, were not dedicated to his Countryman, *Simon Magus*, of whose Deification there is not the least hint in any *Roman* writer, but to a *Sabine Deity*, of ancient worship in *Rome*, and of similar name, SEMONI SANCO [3], frequently mentioned by the old Writers :

as

[1] "Ὁς ἐπὶ Κλαυδίου καίσαρος — θεὸς ἐνομίσθη καὶ ἀνδριάντι παρ' ὑμῶν ὡς θεὸς τετίμηται. ὃς ἀνδριὰς ἀνεγέρθη ἐν τῇ Τίβερει πόλει, μέλαξὺ τῶν δύο γεφυρῶν, ἔχων ἐπιγραφὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ταυτὴν, Σίμωνι Δέῳ Σάτῳ. *Apol.* 1. p. 39.

*Justin* was followed in the belief and assertion of this fact by all the succeeding Fathers. *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Augustinus*, *Epiphanius*, *Eusebius*.

[2] Vid. Ant. Van Dale de Statua Simoni Mago erecta. Differtat.

[3] *Sancus*, as *Dionysius* writes, was a Deity of the old Sabines, whom some called Δία πῑσιον. [Vid. *Dionys. Hal. Antiq.* l. 2. 49. it. 4. 58] and the Ro-

mans



as the Inscription itself, dug up, about two centuries ago, from the ruins of that very place, or little Island, which *Justin* describes, has clearly demonstrated [1].

Now should we allow these cases, to be clear of any fraud or design to deceive ; yet they yield so bad a sample of his understanding, as to render his testimony of very little weight in any other relation whatsoever. For if he was deceived in such plain and obvious facts, where a common discernment and moderate knowledge of history, would have enabled him to have discovered the truth, how much the more easily would he be caught by a confederacy of subtle and crafty Impostors, employing all their arts, to amaze and dazzle the senses of the credulous, and to put off their surprising tricks, for the miraculous effects of a divine power ?

I cannot dismiss this Father, without taking notice of an accusation, which he frequently brings against the *Jews*, *that they had expunged many passages out of the Greek Bibles, in which the character and sufferings of Jesus were clearly de-*

*mons Deum Fidium.* And *Semones*, signified the same as *Ημιθεοι*, Demigods or Heroes deified. *Livy* mentions a Chappel of *Semo Sancus* in *Rome*—to whom the goods of certain enemies were consecrated.—*bona Semoni Sanco censuerunt consecranda positi*——in *Sacello Sanci versus ædem Quirini.* Liv. 8. 20.

[1]

S E M O N I  
S A N C O  
D E O F I D I O  
S A C R V M.

&c.

*Gruter.* Vol. 1. p. xcvi. 5. where there are several more Inscriptions to the same Deity.

*scribed :*



*scribed*: which charge all the learned of these later ages have found to be wholly groundless. Let us see then how he supports it. “ They have erased, says he, out of the book  
 “ of *Esdra*s, the following words ; *Esdra*s said to the peo-  
 “ ple, this passover is our Saviour, and our refuge ; and if  
 “ you will but persuade yourselves, and be convinced in your  
 “ hearts, that we are to humble him in a sign or figure, and  
 “ afterwards to put our trust in him ; this place shall not  
 “ be made desolate to all ages, says the Lord of Hosts.  
 “ But if you do not believe on him, nor attend to his  
 “ preaching, you shall be as dirt to the nations [1].” The  
 Editor of *Justin* remarks here, that this passage is not to be  
 found, in any copies either of the *Apocryphal* or *Canonical*  
*Esdra*s ; nor in any other Christian writer, but *Lactantius* :  
 and instead of being expunged by the *Jews*, appears to have  
 been forged by the *Christians* : where he refers us to the cen-  
 sure of an able Critic and Protestant Divine, *John Croius* ;  
 who charges the forgery on *Justin* himself, in the following  
 words : “ To propose what I think, freely and candidly ;  
 “ and what all honest and religious judges of these matters  
 “ will allow to be true : I take this to have been a pi-  
 “ ous fraud of *Justin*, in which *Lactantius* followed him :  
 “ who forged and published this passage, for the confir-  
 “ mation of the Christian Doctrine, as well as the greatest

[1] Από μὲν ἑν τῶν ἐξηγήσεων, ὧν ἐξηγήσατο Εσδρας εἰς τὸν νόμον τὸν περὶ  
 τοῦ πάσχα, τὴν ἐξήγησιν ταύτην ἀφείλοντο &c. Dial. 292.



“ part of the *Sibylline Oracles*, and the Sentences of *Mercu-*  
“ *rius* [1].”

Again, *Justin* affirms, that in the 90th Psalm it was said, *tell the nations, that the Lord reigned from the tree* : and that the *Jews* had erased the words, *from the tree*. But as there is no footstep of these words, either in the Vulgate, or any of the *Greek* or *Hebrew* copies, it is manifest, says the Editor, that *they were not expunged by the Jews, but added by the Christians* [2]. Lastly, he charges them *with expunging a passage of Jeremiah*, which yet he owns to be retained in some copies of their synagogues : as it actually is in all copies, both *Greek* and *Hebrew*, to this day. Upon which the Editor says, *that he absolves the Jews again from all fraud, but cannot absolve Justin from the utmost negligence and rashness* [3]. So unlucky and injudicious was this Father, in his charge of these frauds on the *Jews*, as to give an occasion onely for fixing them after all upon the Christians, and, in the opinion of some, even upon himself.

The learned and ingenious Editor of his *Apologies and Dialogues*, who shews an inclination, to defend him on all occa-

[1] Sed fatis patet ab aliquo Christiano conficta esse, non a Judæis deleta.— Quod autem *Jeannes Croius*, Observat. in. N. T. p. 205, *Justinum* hujus fraudis artificem fuisse affirmat, in eo sane non Martyris nostri, in quem ista suspicio non cadit, sed suam potius ipsius existimationem lædit, &c. Vid. Not. ad loc.

[2] Manifestissimum tamen est, hæc verba—non fuisse a Judæis resecta, sed ab aliquo Christiano addita, &c. Not. ad Dial. p. 294.

[3] Καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν διὰ Ἱερειῶν λεχθέντων ταῦτα περιέκοψαν. Ib. 293.

Nos quoque Judæos fraudis absolvimus, *Justinum* summæ negligentiae & temeritatis absolvere non possumus. Not. ad loc.



sions, where he is defensible, and on some, even where he is not, yet is often forced to break out into a kind of astonishment, at his ignorance, negligence, rashness, credulity, so gross in many instances, as to baffle all the art of criticism, nor to admit any certain rule, of collecting his real sense. Yet *there are some still*, says he, *who extoll him, not onely as a most learned, but a most eloquent writer* [1].

*Irenæus*, whose character and doctrines come next to be considered, was, of all the Fathers, whose works still remain to us, the most diligent collector and assertor of *Apostolic traditions*. And in truth, as far as his judgement and veracity may be relied upon, he seems to have been well qualified for that character ; being acquainted, as he tells us, with several, who had conversed familiarly with the Apostles, and curious also to inform himself, of all the particular doctrines, which they had ever taught by word of mouth. “ He lived, says Mr. *Dodwell*, so near to the times of the  
“ Apostles, as to be able, to transmit their doctrines to po-  
“ sterity with certainty and fidelity, as they were delivered to  
“ him by oral tradition, from their immediate Successors and  
“ Disciples [2].” Yet *Photius*, one of the ablest Critics of his own, or any other age of the Church, has intimated a different

[1] Vid. Edit. Lond. 1722. & Clarissimi Thirlbii Annotat. ad p. 130, 206, 293, 378, &c. Et tamen sunt, qui hunc non tantum doctissimum, verum etiam eloquentissimum esse prædicant. p. 305.

[2] Sufficit enim, ut Apostolorum tempora ita prope contigerit, ut quid senserint Apostoli, posset orali traditione ad posteros deducere, traditionisque illius certus & fidelis esse testis. Diff. Iren. § 3.



character of him in the following short censure upon his writings ; in which, *he thought it necessary*, he says, *to advertise the reader, that in some of them, the purity of truth, with respect to Ecclesiastical doctrines, is adulterated by his false and spurious reasonings* [1]. But the following instances of the doctrines, which he delivers, as orthodox and *Apostolic*, will be the surest rule of determining his real character, as well as the proper degree of credit, which may be due to his testimony.

He affirms then, *that our Saviour lived to an old age, or was fifty years old at the least*, at the time of his crucifixion ; which he attempts to prove, first, from the reason of the thing ; “ that as Christ came to save all men, of all ranks  
“ and degrees, so it was necessary, that he should pass  
“ through all the several stages of life, that he might be a  
“ pattern to them all : 2dly, from the unanimous tradition  
“ and positive testimony of all the old men, who had lived  
“ with St. *John*, and the other Apostles, from whom, he  
“ says, they all received this account, and constantly bore  
“ witness to the truth of it [2].” Yet *this unanimous tradition,*

[1] Phot. Bibl. c. cxx.

[2] Sic & Senior in Senioribus, ut sit perfectus Magister in omnibus, non solum secundum expositionem veritatis, sed & secundum ætatem, sanctificans simul Seniores, exemplum ipsis quoque fiens ——— a quinquagesimo anno declinat jam in ætatem seniore : quam habens Dominus noster docebat. Sicut Evangelium & omnes Seniores testantur, qui in Asia apud Joannem discipulum Domini convenerunt, id ipsum tradidisse eis Joannem. Permanfit autem cum eis usque ad Trajani tempora. Quidam autem eorum non solum Joannem, sed.



*tradition*, so solemnly vouched by this venerable Father, is as certainly false, as the Gospels are true. Dr. *Whitby*, after he has produced this same passage, cries out, as it were, with astonishment, “ Behold here, according to *Irenæus*, “ how all the Elders of *Asia* testify with one voice, that “ they had received from St. *John* and the other Apostles, “ a tradition, concerning a fact manifestly false ! behold an “ *Apostolic* man, professing to prove from St. *John*’s Gospel, “ things not onely contradictory to that Gospel, but to the “ articles of our Creed [1] ! &c.” The learned *Cave* also, in his Life of *Irenæus*, tells us, “ that he was betrayed into “ this error, — partly from a mistaken report, which he “ had somewhere picked up, (and it may be from his Master “ *Papias*) and partly out of opposition to his adversaries, who “ maintained, that our Saviour staid no longer upon earth, “ than till the thirty-first year of his age ; against whom the “ eagerness of disputation tempted him to make good his “ assertion from any plausible pretence [2], &c.

He asserts likewise the doctrine of the *Millennium*, in the grossest sense of it, from the same authority of a tradition, handed down to him by all the old men, who had conversed with St. *John*, and heard him relate, *what our Saviour himself used to teach concerning it* : of which he has recorded

sed & alios Apostolos viderunt, & hæc eadem de ipsis audierunt : & testantur de hujusmodi relatione. *Iren.* l. 2. c. 39. Edit. Oxon.

[1] Vid. *Whitby* Strict. Patr. in Joh. c. 8. 57. p. 220.

[2] Life of *Iren.* § x. p. 170.



the following passage ; “ The days will come, in which there  
 “ shall grow vineyards, having each 10,000 vine stocks ;  
 “ and each stock, 10,000 branches ; each branch, 10,000  
 “ shoots ; each shoot, 10,000 bunches ; each bunch 10,000  
 “ grapes ; and each grape squeezed shall yield twenty-five  
 “ measures of wine ; and when any of the Saints shall go to  
 “ pluck a bunch ; another bunch will cry out, I am a  
 “ better, take me, and bless the Lord through me. In like  
 “ manner a grain of wheat sown shall bear 10,000 stalks ;  
 “ each stalk 10,000 grains ; and each grain 10,000 pounds  
 “ of the finest flower ; and so all other fruits, seeds and  
 “ herbs in the same proportion, &c. These words, says he,  
 “ *Papias*, a disciple of St. *John*, and companion of *Poly-*  
 “ *carp*, an ancient man, testifies in writing in his fourth  
 “ book, and adds, that they are credible to those who be-  
 “ lieve [1].” The pious and cautious Dr. *Grabe* remarks  
 on this occasion, “ that what *Irenæus* says here about the  
 “ stalks of grain, will be thought an argument of straw by  
 “ those, to whom such things appear incredible : but, that  
 “ we ought not however, either to deny or affirm any thing

[1] Ταῦτα δὲ καὶ Παπίας, Ἰωάννης μὲν ἀκροῦς, Πολυκάρπῳ δὲ ἑταίρῳ γεγονώς, ἀρχαῖον ἀνὴρ ἐγγράφως ἐπιμαρτυρεῖ.—Et adjecit, dicens, hæc autem credibilia sunt credentibus. l. 5. p. 455.

*Irenæus* then proceeds to confirm this doctrine, by the testimonies, of the Prophets, *Isaiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Jeremiah*, *Daniel*, and the revelations of St. *John* : and contends, that it cannot be interpreted Allegorically, but will be fulfilled according to the letter in an earthly Jerusalem.

“ rashly



“ rashly [1].” But *Eusebius* gives a frank and clear solution of the matter, by informing us, that *Papias* was a weak man, of a very shallow understanding, as it appeared from his writings, and by mistaking the meaning of the *Apostles*, imposed these silly traditions on *Irenæus*, and the greatest part of the *Ecclesiastical* writers, who reflecting on the age of the man, and his near approach to the *Apostles*, were drawn by him into the same opinions [2].

*Irenæus* affirms also, on the same authority of tradition, delivered to him by those, who had received it from the *Apostles*, that *Enoch* and *Elias* were translated into that very *Paradise*, from which *Adam* was expelled, to remain there, till the consummation of all things : and that it was the same

[1] Hoc quod *Irenæus* pro ubertate & magnitudine fructuum ex *paleis* necit argumentum, *Stramineum* fortasse vocaverint, quibus ista sunt incredibilia. Sed de hisce nihil temere negandum, uti nec affirmandum. Annot. ad loc. p. 455.

[2] Σφόδρα γάρτοι σμικρὸς ὢν τὸν νῦν. ὡς ἂν ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν λόγων τεκμηριώμενον εἰπεῖν, φαίνεται. πλὴν καὶ τοῖς μετ’ αὐτὸν πλείστοις, ὅσοις τῶν *Εκκλησιαστικῶν*, τῆς ὁμοίας αὐτῷ δόξης, παρ’ αὐτοῦ γέγονε, τὴν ὀρχαιότητα τ’ αὐτοῦ προβεβλημένοις. ὥσπερ ἔνι εἰρηναίῳ, καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος τὰ ὅμοια φρονῶν ἀναπέφηνεν. *Eus. Hist.* l. 3. 39.

N. B. *Eusebius* indeed, in another place, speaks of *Papias* in a very different strain, as of a person singularly remarkable for his eloquence and knowledge of the *Scriptures*. [l. 3. c. 36] But this passage, as the learned *Valesius* informs us, is not found in any of the old copies, which he had consulted, nor in the ancient version of *Rufinus*. Whence he concludes, that it was inserted by some ignorant Scholiast, as being contradictory to what *Eusebius* had more explicitly delivered elsewhere of the same *Papias*. Vid. Not. *Vales.* ad loc.



place, into which St. Paul also was caught up [1]. This is affirmed likewise by all the later Fathers, both *Greek* and *Latin* ; induced to it, we may imagine, by the pretence of an Apostolical tradition : which yet from the absurdity of it, must necessarily be as false, as the rest above mentioned. *Feverdantius*, the learned Editor of *Irenæus*, remarks upon this place ; that tho' St. Austin does not allow this opinion to be a point of faith, yet since *Irenæus* and all the Primitive Fathers declare it to have been the doctrine of the Apostles, he cannot think it safe to believe otherwise [2]. And we must needs own him to be in the right, if, according to the principles of the Church of *Rome*, we can think the positive testimony of *Irenæus*, or the concurrent authority of all the Fathers, of weight enough to bear down the common sense and reason of mankind.

He asserts likewise very strongly, the fabulous story of the *Septuagint version*, with all the particulars already recited, of it's miraculous birth, and the separate cells, &c. To which he has added another, no less romantic ; that the sacred Scriptures were utterly destroyed in the Babylonish captivity, but restored again, after seventy years, by *Esdra*s, inspired by God for that purpose [3]. And tho' in this also, he was followed by all the principal Fathers of the succeeding centuries,

[1] Διὸ καὶ λέγουσιν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι, τῶν Ἀποστόλων μαθηταὶ, τὰς μετὰ Πέτρου ἐκείσε μετατέθειναι. &c. l. 5. p. 405.

[2] Vid. ibid. Not. 5.

[3] Ὅς—ἐν τῇ—αἰχμαλωσίᾳ τῆς λαῆς, διαφθαρεῖσιν τῶν γραφῶν—ἐνέπνευσεν Εσδράς τῷ ἱερεῖ. &c. l. 3. c. 25.



yet as Dr. *Prideaux*, and other learned men have remarked, there is no better foundation for it, than that *fabulous relation*, in the *fourteenth chapter of the second apocryphal book of Esdras*: a book, too absurd even for the Romanists themselves, to admit into their canon [1]: and notwithstanding the authority of *Irenæus*, and of all the other Fathers, who assert the same opinion, Mr. *Tillemont* declares it to be very dangerous to religion, and tending, extremely to weaken the authority of the Scriptures [2]. He intimates also more than once, his belief, of *Angels mixing with the daughters of men*: where his Editor takes notice, that all the early Fathers were drawn into the same error, by the authority of the *Apocryphal book of Enoch*, cited by St. *Jude* [3]. Yet as monstrous as this error was, it maintained its ground, as Dr. *Whitby* assures us, through the four first centuries; tho' St. *Chrysostom* treats it, as *absurd and blasphemous*, and all, who espoused it,

[1] Prid. Connect. par. 1. p. 260. Vid. Ant. Van Dale Dissert. de Aristea. p. 151.

[2] Mais l'autorité de ces Peres ne l'empêche pas d'alléguer diverses raisons contre une opinion, qu'on peut dire très dangereuse à la religion, puisqu'elle affoiblit extrêmement l'autorité de l'Écriture. Memoir. Eccles. Tom. 3. p. 93.

[3] Cum Angeli transgressores commixti fuissent eis. l. 4. c. 70. p. 371. Not. 2. and l. 5. c. 29.

Neque *Judas Apostolus*, ad cujus testimonium *Tertullianus* provocat, libros *Enochi* canonicos fecit, dum quandam ex iis prophetiam de adventu Domini ad judicium allegavit. &c. Grab. Spicil. Patr. Vol. I. in Not. p. 344.

Hæc forte respexit S. *Judas* vers. 6. scribens, Ἀγγέλους ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον &c. ——— Similiter ante ipsum S. *Petrus* in posteriori epistola c. 2. v. 4. cujus obscura quodammodo verba ex his *Enochi* verbis bene explicantur. ibid. p. 351.



*as mad* ; and *Theodoret* calls them *infatuated and very stupid* [1].

From some of the doctrines above mentioned, and particularly that of the *Millennium*, Mr. *Chillingworth* has proved against the *Romanists*, that the *Catholic Church*, even in the earliest ages, and within thirty or forty years after the *Apostles*, was not infallible in matters of faith: since all those absurdities were taught by the Fathers of those ages, not as their private opinions onely, but as doctrines of the Universal Church, derived immediately from the *Apostles*, and held so necessary, that those, who held the contrary, were hardly considered, as real Christians: to which he adds the following remark ; that if *Papias*, who first committed them to writing, could either by his own error, or a desire to deceive, cozen the Fathers of the purest age in this, why not also in other things? Why not in twenty, as well as one? And why might not twenty others do it as well as he [2]?

As to *Irenæus's* manner of expounding the Scriptures, it is much the same with that of *Justin*, or rather, according to Dr. *Grabe*, with that of the age, in which he lived: following no rule of criticism ; nor giving any attention to the proper signification of words ; but indulging a wild and enthusiastic fancy, in the invention of typical senses, and forced

[1] Obtinuit hæc sententia apud Patres fere omnes, qui quatuor primævis seculis floruerunt &c. vid. Whitby *Strictur. Patrum.* in Gen. c. vi. 4. p. 5.

[2] See his *Additional Discourses*, p. 36, 37. at the end of his *Works*, in Edit. 7th.



allusions, utterly trifling and contemptible : *which those, who read the Fathers, must always bear in mind, as a learned Critic observes, or they will be drawn into great and frequent errors* [1].

Treating of the distinction of Animals into clean and unclean, he says ; “ The law foretold these things figuratively ;  
 “ by animals denoting men. Those, who divide the hoof  
 “ and chew the cud, it pronounces clean : those, who do  
 “ neither, unclean. Who then are clean ? Those, who be-  
 “ lieve in the Father and the Son. This is their Firmness,  
 “ or double hoof : and to meditate day and night on the  
 “ laws of God, so as to be adorned with good works, is to  
 “ chew the cud. But the unclean neither divide the hoof,  
 “ nor chew the cud : that is, neither have faith in God,  
 “ nor meditate on his laws. This is the abomination of  
 “ the Gentiles. But such as chew the cud, and do not di-  
 “ vide the hoof, are unclean : this is a figurative descrip-  
 “ tion of the *Jews* [2].” With much more to the same purpose. In which method of reasoning, as he followed *Barnabas*, and the Apostolic Fathers, so he was followed

[1] Quorum nec stylus magnopere est elaboratus, nec ratiocinationes ad rectæ rationis & veræ criticæ normam exactæ, nec notiones satis perspicuæ, aut per omnia inter sese consentientes, nec principia usquequaque vera. Quod iis, qui Scriptores Ecclesiasticos legunt, perpetuo animo obversari oportet, ni in frequentes & graves errores incidere velint. Jo. Cleric. Hist. Eccles. p. 775.

[1] Prædixit hæc omnia figuraliter lex, de animalibus delineans hominem. — Qui sunt ergo mundi ? qui in Patrem & Filium per fidem iter firmiter faciunt : hæc est enim firmitas eorum, qui duplicis sunt ungulæ. &c. l. 5. c. 8.



himself by the later writers ; and especially by *Clemens of Alexandria*, who has copied this very passage [1].

Again, endeavouring to prove that the *Mosaic law* was to fill up the middle age of the world, between the natural law, and the law of Christ, he says ; “ This was typically  
 “ shewn by many things, but especially by *Thamar*, daugh-  
 “ ter-in-law to *Judas*. For when she was bringing out  
 “ twins, one of them put out his hand the first ; and as  
 “ the midwife supposed him to be the firstborn, she tied  
 “ a scarlet string about his hand. But when this was done,  
 “ he drew in his hand again, and his brother *Phares* came  
 “ out first ; and after him *Zara*, who had the mark. The  
 “ Scripture clearly manifesting by it the people, who had  
 “ the scarlet sign ; that is, the faith professed by those of  
 “ the foreskin, or the uncircumcised : which was first shewn  
 “ out in the Patriarchs, and then withdrawn, that it’s bro-  
 “ ther might be brought out first ; and then he be born  
 “ afterwards, who had been shewn before, and was known  
 “ by the scarlet sign : which is the passion of the Just one ;  
 “ præfigured from the beginning in *Abel*, described by the  
 “ Prophets, but perfected in the last days by the Son  
 “ of God [2].”

[1] Καθαρὰ καὶ δεξιὰ τῷ Θεῷ παραδίδωσιν ἡ γραφή. ὡς ἂν εἰς πατέρα καὶ εἰς υἱὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῶν δικαίων τὴν πορείαν ποιημένων αὕτη γὰρ ἡ τῶν διχηλέσιων ἐδραιότης. Strom. l. 7. xviii. p. 900. Ed. Oxon.

[2] Hoc & per alia quidem multa, jam vero & per *Thamar* Judæ nūrum typice ostenditur. &c. l. 4. c. 42.



His reasoning also upon the number of the Gospels is in the same strain : “ It is impossible, says he, that there  
 “ could have been more or less than four. For there are four  
 “ climates, and four cardinal winds ; and the Church is  
 “ spread over the whole earth ; but the Gospel is the pillar  
 “ and foundation of the Church, and it’s breath of life.  
 “ The Church therefore was to have four pillars, blowing  
 “ immortality from every quarter, and giving life to  
 “ men [1], &c.

I have been the fuller in opening the characters and opinions of *Justin* and *Irenæus*, that I might save myself the trouble of enlarging in the same manner on the rest : especially as their characters will be sufficiently illustrated, by the specimens of them occasionally interspersed, in the sequel of this argument. But the later Fathers, generally speaking, do

[1] Neque autem plura numero quam hæc sunt, neque rursus pauciora capit esse Evangelia. Επειδὴ —τέσσαρα κλίματα τῷ κόσμῳ, ἐν ᾗ ἔσμεν, εἰσὶ, καὶ τέσσαρα καθόλικα πνεύματα. &c. l. 3. p. 220, 21.

N. B. This puts me in mind of a specimen also of *Tertullian*’s judgement and way of reasoning, on the quæstion ; *why the number of the Apostles was twelve*, and no other. I can account for this, says he, not onely by the voices of the Prophets, but by arguments drawn from things : for I find this number prefigured to us by the Creator. There were twelve wells in *Elim* : twelve gemms in the vest of *Aaron* ; twelve stones chosen by *Joshua* out of the river *Jordan*, and deposited in the Ark of the covenant : by all which the twelve Apostles were signified ; who like fountains, were to water the dry desert of the Gentile world ; like gemms, to illuminate the sacred Vestment of the Church, which Christ the High Priest put on ; and like stones, were firm in the faith. Cont. Marcion. l. 4. p. 519. D.



but copy the notions, and even the blunders of these two. For as they are the earliest, who have left any considerable works behind them, so they are the first likewise in credit and authority with succeeding ages, on the account of their piety, learning, and abilities: and the case was the same with the ancients, as it is still with the moderns; that when any facts or doctrines have once been established by men of eminent character, they are usually taken upon trust by all who follow, till some new inquirer arises, who, not content with opinions imposed on him by chance or education, resolves to judge for himself, and to use his natural right and liberty of searching into the real grounds of them.

For instance; St. *Clemens of Rome* having alledged the ridiculous story of the *Phœnix*, as a type and proof of the resurrection; all the later Fathers take it from him of course, and refer us to the same bird, not onely as really existing, but as created on purpose by God, to refute the incredulity of the Gentiles, on the subject of this great article of our faith. Yet all the heathen writers, from whom they borrowed the story, from *Herodotus*, down to their own times, treat it as nothing else but a mere fable [1]. The case is the same with all the other facts, and absurd doctrines above specified; of the Millennium; of Angels debauching women, and begetting Dæmons; of the divinity of the Septuagint version; of the destruc-

[1] Ἑμοὶ μὲν ἔτι πρὶν λέγοντες &c. Herodot. l. 2. § 73. Vid. it. Whitby Strictur. Patr. in Psalm. xcii. 12. p. 85. it. Bochart. Hierozoic. Paraphr. l. 6. c. 5. p. 817.



*tion of the sacred Scriptures in the Babylonish captivity, &c.* In all which, these two Fathers, whose principles I have been illustrating, were implicitly followed, for a century or two at least, by all their Successors. *Irenæus* indeed stands single in his account of *the old age of Christ*; tho' confidently affirmed by him, on the pretended authority of all the Apostles; because it was evidently inconsistent with the history of the Gospels. But the later Fathers generally ran into a contrary extreme, and affirmed, what was maintained by the *Heretics onely of Irenæus's days*, that our Lord preached but one complete year, and died at the age of thirty: which, according to *Clemens of Alexandria*, was both foretold by the Prophets, and affirmed by the Evangelists [1]. Whereas from the history of the Gospels, it is evident, that his ministry continued through several successive Passovers, or as Sir *Isaac Newton* has with great probability computed, through five; and that he died in his *thirty-fourth year* [2].

Now from what I have above collected, it is certain, that if a gross absurdity of opinions, and the belief of things

[1] Καὶ ὅτι ἐνιαυτὸν μόνον ἔδει αὐτὸν κηρύξαι, καὶ τῷτο γέγραπται ἔτως. ἐνιαυτὸν δευτέρου κυρίου κηρύξαι ἀπέσειλε με. τῷτο καὶ ὁ προφήτης εἶπεν, καὶ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον. Strom. i. p. 407. Vid. Not. in loc. Edit. Oxon. Quinto decimo anno imperii (Tiberii) passus est Christus, annos habens triginta cum pateretur. Tertuli. adv. Jud. p. 215.

[2] Thus have we, in the Gospels of *Matthew* and *John*, all things told in due order, from the beginning of *John's* preaching to the death of Christ; and the years distinguished by such essential characters, that they cannot be mistaken. Observat. on the Proph. of Dan. c. xi. p. 159.

impossible,



impossible, be the proof of a weak mind; if expositions of the Scriptures, void of reason and common sense, betray a great want of judgement, then we may justly charge those defects upon these ancient fathers; from whose foolish reasonings, both in religion and morality, whole books have been compiled [4]. Mr. *Dodwell*, one of their most zealous admirers, does not pretend to defend them on this head; but frankly owns, that their way of reasoning is *loose, sophistical and declamatory; far short of the solidity of the moderns; who excell them not onely in philosophy and learning, but in the*

[4] Vid. Dan. Whitby. *Structuræ Patrum* — *Traité de la Morale des Peres*. Par Jean Barbeyrac — *Dallæus* &c.

N. B. I shall here take the liberty to transcribe the following note, from a very ingenious and candid Advocate of Christianity, the Rev. *Archdeacon of Carlisle*, as it exhibits a just idea of the characters and writings of these earliest Fathers.

“ Christianity was in it’s infancy, at most in it’s childhood, when these men  
 “ wrote, and therefore it is no wonder, that they *spake as Children*, that they  
 “ *understood as children*, that they *thought as children*. This was according to  
 “ the œconomy they were then under. And besides, they had not time and lei-  
 “ sure to search into the Christian doctrines, nor had they laid in a sufficient  
 “ stock and fund for that purpose, they being but newly adopted into the Chri-  
 “ stian Church: yet they were willing to appear in it’s behalf, and to defend it  
 “ as well as they could, which was accepted by Heaven. [Edward’s *Patrologia*.  
 “ p. 57.] Let me not be censured, tho’ I should be so bold as to say, that we  
 “ should have understood the Scriptures much better, if we had not had the  
 “ writings of the Fathers: for they have obscured and depraved them by their  
 “ different and contrary comments: They have raised controversies, taught  
 “ men to quarrel and dispute about the sense of several texts, which otherwise  
 “ are plain and obvious, and about several matters of practice, which are evi-  
 “ dent enough in themselves, some of which are superstitious &c. *ib.* p. 135.  
 See Considerations on the State of the world with regard to Religion &c. p. 174.



*knowledge of antiquity, and even of their own languages : and all that he pleads for in favor of their interpretations, especially of the New Testament, is, that they should not be wholly slighted, tho' they have but little sense in them, because they were agreeable to the custom or taste of those ages [1].*

As to the quæstion of their veracity, it may admit perhaps some debate, and it will probably be thought harsh in the opinion of many, to suspect men of such piety and sanctity of life, either of the invention, or the propagation of known forgeries. Yet there are many things so peremptorily affirmed, without any ground of truth or probability, by the two Fathers, whose characters I have been considering, as to give us too much cause for such a suspicion : which, as we have seen above, has been actually charged on *Justin*, by men of learning, and may, with equal reason, be charged also on *Irenæus*. For what other account can be given of his frequent appeals to the tradition and testimony of the Apostles, for the support of so many absurd and incredible doctrines ? If the doctrines themselves be false ; the pretended tradition of them

[1] Quin bonas litteras studiosius excultas a nuperis nostris Ecclesiæ Reformatibus libenter agnoscimus. Nec in philosophia modo, sed in antiquitate, in ipsis etiam linguis eorum temporum vernaculis. Sed & pressiore nostris & solidiorem argumentandi methodum agnoscimus, quam sit alia illa laxior & sophistica & declamatoria, quæ non apud Patres duntaxat ; sed & alios eorundem temporum Scriptores, erat receptissima — Dodwell. Præfat. ad Dissertat. in Iren. §. 15.

Sic illis nimirum deferendum esse in Scripturarum interpretatione censemus, ut ne quidem ratiocinia alioqui minus solida, quæ tamen fuerint in more seculi, plane negligenda sint. ib, § 16.

could



could not possibly be true : and if we absolve *Irenæus* from the forgery ; it must be charged on somebody else, more ancient still, and of authority enough, to impose it upon him ; and on whomsoever it may fall, it gives but a lamentable idea of those primitive ages, and primitive champions of the Christian cause.

*Papias*, who is supposed to have been the disciple of St. *John*, and Bishop of *Hierapolis*, is said to have given rise to most of the fabulous traditions, which obtained in those early days. Dr. *Whitby* joins *Irenæus* to him, and says ; “ it “ is very remarkable, that these two earliest writers of the “ second century, who, on the credit of idle reports and “ uncertain fame, have delivered to us things said to be “ done by the Apostles and their scholars, have shamefully “ imposed upon us, by the forgery of fables and false “ stories [1].” But whoever forged the rest of the spurious traditions above recited, yet that, which relates to *the old age of Jesus*, the most solemnly attested of them all, and peculiar to *Irenæus*, may be fairly presumed to be his own forgery, because it was never embraced by any body else, and was singularly adapted to the argument, which he was then asserting, in opposition to certain Heretics, called

[1] Id denique imprimis observandum est, duos primos Scriptores secundi seculi, qui ex rumusculis famaue dubia res gestas a Domini Apostolis, eorumque discipulis nobis tradiderunt,—fabulis fingendis, falsisque narrationibus, nobis turpiter illuisse. Præf. ad Strictur. Patr. p. LXXIII.



*Valentinians*, who allowed *but one intire year* to our Saviour's ministry [1].

But be that as it will ; since the very earliest of all traditions, and the nearest to the fountain's head, are found to be so corrupt ; it will demonstrate at least, what a treacherous foundation they must be, to build any opinion upon, and much more, any article of our faith : which might be exemplified by many other instances from the history of the first centuries. For as soon as religious disputes began to infest the Church, the plea of Apostolical tradition was presently employed, as the most effectual to silence an adversary ; and was taken up therefore and urged with equal confidence by all sides. And it is an argument indeed, which of all others seems the best calculated for the use of controversy : for wherever it meets with credit, it must necessarily have great weight ; and where it happens even to find none, yet it cannot easily be confuted ; as not being reducible to any clear test, or fixed rule, by which it may be tried. It is not therefore strange, to find its authority carried so high, and in some cases, magnified even above the Scriptures themselves, by all the dealers in controversy, from the earliest Fathers, down to Dr. *Waterland*.

For example ; in that most ancient and celebrated dispute between the eastern and western Churches, *about the time of holding their Easter*, St. *Polycarp*, Bishop of *Smyrna*, the Di-

[2] Ἐνιαυτῷ γὰρ ἐνὶ βέλους αὐτὸν μετὰ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτῷ κεκηρυχέναι.  
Iren. l. i. c. i. p. 16.



disciple and immediate Successor of the Apostles, and *Anicetus* his contemporary, the Bishop of *Rome*, severally alledged the authority of *Apostolic tradition* for their different practice, from which neither of them could be induced to depart [1]. But *Papias*, as it is hinted above, the disciple of *Polycarp*. was the chief promotor and assertor of it: “as oft, says he, “as I met with any one, who had conversed with the an- “cients, I always inquired very diligently after their say- “ings and doctrines: what *Andrew*, *Peter*, *Philip*, *John*, --- “and the rest of our Lord’s Apostles used to teach. For I “was persuaded, that I could not profit so much by books, “as by the voice of living witnesses [2].” *Irenæus*, the scholar of *Papias*, who had learnt the use of it from his master, was likewise a zealous assertor of it. “If a dispute, says “he, should arise, about any matter, tho’ but of little mo- “ment, ought we not to have recourse to the most ancient “Churches, in which the Apostles resided, and take from “them what is certain and clear about the point in quæ- “stion [3]?” *Tertullian* declares it to be the onely weapon, that

[1] Οὐτε γὰρ ὁ Ανίκητος τὸν Πολύκαρπον πείσαι ἐδύνατο μὴ τηρεῖν ἅτε μετὰ Ἰωάννη τῶ μαθητῶ τῶ Κυρίου ἡμῶν, καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν Αποστόλων, οἷς συνδιέτριψεν, αἰεὶ τετηρηκότα. &c. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 5. c. 24.

[2] Εἰ δὲ πᾶς καὶ παρηκολογηθῶς τις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἔλθοι, τῶν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἀνέκρινον λόγους. τί Ανδρέας ἢ τί Πέτρος εἶπεν. ἢ τί Φίλιππος. ἢ τί Θωμᾶς, ἢ Ἰάκωβος. ἢ τί Ἰωάννης. ἢ Ματθαῖος. ἢ τίς ἕτερος τῶν τῶν κυρίου μαθητῶν. &c. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 39. p. 136.

[3] Refert *Irenæus*, vir Apostolicorum temporum, & *Papiæ*, auditoris Evan-



that can knock down an Heretic : and in all such controversies, advances it's authority above the Scriptures ; nay, forbids any appeal to the Scriptures, as hurtful to the cause of truth. *We must not appeal to the Scriptures, says he, or trust the merits of the cause with them : in which there can either be no victory, or an uncertain one, or what is equivalent to uncertain* [1]. And in this, Dr. Waterland declares, that he seems to have judged well, upon the prudential case, and like a wise and sagacious man, with regard to the circumstances of those times [2]. And in another place the same learned Doctor observes, from the authority of Irenæus, that Polycarp had converted great numbers to the Faith by the strength of tradition ; being a sensible argument, and more affecting, he says, at that time, than any dispute from the bare letter of the Scripture could be [3].

Here then we see in short, the origin and history of tradition. *Papias, a weak and silly man, who mistook the sense*

Evangelistæ Joannis, discipulus. Hieron. Ep. 53. ad Theodoram. Op. Tom. 4. par. 2. p. 581. Edit. Benedict.

Et si aliquibus de aliqua modica quæstione disceptatio esset, nonne oporteret in antiquissimas recurrere Ecclesias, in quibus Apostoli conversati sunt, & ab eis de præsentī quæstione sumere quod certum & re liquidum est? l. 3. c. iv. p. 205.

[1] Ergo non ad Scripturas provocandum est : nec in his constituendum certamen ; in quibus aut nulla aut incerta victoria est, aut par incertæ. De præscript. Hæreticor. 19.

[2] Wherein to me he seems to have judged very well upon the prudential case, and like a wise and sagacious man. Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 378.

[3] Ibid. p. 380. Not. y.



of the Apostles, was the first, who made it his particular business to recommend the use of it, and for that purpose took the pains to collect all the unwritten facts and sayings of Christ and his Apostles, from the report of those, who had conversed with them. These sayings, as *Eusebius* tells us, consisted of a number of *strange parables, and doctrines of our Saviour, with several other fabulous stories*; which the authority of so venerable a person, who had lived with the Apostles, imposed upon the Church for genuine [1]: and the gravity

[1] Καὶ ἄλλα δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς συγγραφεὺς, ὡς ἐκ παραδόσεως ἀγράφῃ, εἰς αὐτὸν ἠκούσας παραλίθειναι, ξένους τὲ τινὰς παραβολὰς τῷ Σωτῆρι καὶ διδασκαλίας αὐτῷ, καὶ τινὰ ἄλλα μυθικώτερα. Euseb. Hist. l. 3. c. 39.

N. B. Nothing more effectually demonstrates the uncertainty of all tradition, than what is delivered to us by Antiquity, concerning this very *Papias*. *Irenæus* declares him, to have been *the companion of Polycarp, and the Disciple of St. John the Apostle*. [l. 5. c. 33.] But *Eusebius* tells us, that he was not a disciple of *John the Apostle*, but of *John, called the Elder or Presbyter*, who was a companion onely of the Apostles: and whom *Irenæus* by mistake imagined to be the Apostle. [Hist. l. 3. 38.] Now *Irenæus* might probably be born while *St. John* was still living, and had conversed very familiarly in his youth with *Polycarp*, the disciple of that Apostle, and declares, *that he retained the memory of all things which he had learnt from him, more distinctly, than of things, which had happened to him much later*. [Euseb. 5. 20.] He was well acquainted also with *Papias*, whom he calls an ancient man: which makes it seem probable, both that *Papias* was contemporary with the Apostle *John*, and that *Irenæus* could not be mistaken in his account of *Papias's* master, which he might have received from *Papias* himself: and for this reason the generality of the modern writers prefer the authority of *Irenæus* to that of *Eusebius*, who lived two hundred years later. Yet after all, it is evident, from the express words of *Papias*, as they are cited by *Eusebius*, that *Papias* had never personally heard or known any of the Apostles, but received his reports of them onely from those, who had: and that *Irenæus* therefore was deceived by the identity of



gravity of his scholar *Irenæus* confirmed and propagated to succeeding ages : through which, every one still added to the collection, whatever he thought useful to the particular cause or opinion, that he favored. This account of the matter, deduced from the testimony of antiquity itself, confutes at once all the extravagant encomiums, which our leading Divines so lavishly bestow on those primitive Fathers, and their traditions. For if the earliest and best vouched traditions of all, which are transmitted to us, be true, or at all to be regarded, it follows of course, that we ought to receive the absurd doctrines above mentioned, as articles of faith ; *the fable of the Millennium ; of Angels begetting Dæmons on the bodies of women ; of the old age of Christ, of Ænoch translated into Adam's paradise ;* with many more of the same stamp ; which were all embraced by the earliest Fathers, and delivered to us, on the authority of the Apostles, by some of their immediate Successors ; and especially by those four, on whom Dr. *Waterland* lays the greatest stress ; *Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus and Clemens of Alexandria ;* “ eminent personages, as he says, who flourished

the name, and had never heard perhaps of that other *John*, called the *Presbyter* ; who is supposed by some of the principal Fathers, to have written *the second and third Epistles*, as well as *the book of Revelations*, now ascribed to the Apostle. [Euseb. Hist. 3. 38. Hieron. Catalog. Scriptor. de Joan. Apost. & Papia.] The learned Mr. *Dodwell* therefore declares it to be certain, that *John the Master of Papias*, was a different man from the Apostle ; and consequently, that *Irenæus himself, and Polycrates his contemporary, and Clemens Alexandrinus also, who was but a little younger, were all mistaken, with regard to this fact*, Dissert. in Iren. I. § IV.

“ within



“ within fifty, sixty, or at most ninety years from the A-  
 “ postolic age. Whose nearness to the time ; known fidelity ;  
 “ admirable indowments ordinary and extraordinary, add  
 “ great weight to their testimony or doctrine, and make it a  
 “ probable rule of interpretation in the prime things [1].”  
 To which he subjoins in a marginal note, “ that *Clemens*,  
 “ tho’ the latest of the four, yet testifies of himself, that he  
 “ had received his doctrine from several disciples of the very  
 “ chief Apostles ; who had truly preserved the tradition of  
 “ the blessed doctrine, as it came directly from the holy  
 “ Apostles, *Peter, James, and John.*” Notwithstanding  
 all which, the Doctor could not but know, that this very  
*Clemens* holds as many absurd, unsound, and exploded doc-  
 trines, and deals as largely in the fabulous and apochryphal  
 books of the primitive Christians, as any other Father what-  
 soever. These facts shew likewise the weakness of that ar-  
 gument, which the Doctor alledges for the truth of doctrines,  
 from *the unanimity*, with which they are asserted by the an-  
 cient writers. “ This is the argument, says he, which *Ire-*  
*næus* and *Tertullian* insist much upon and triumph in, over  
 the Hæretics of their days — for it is highly unreasonable to  
 “ suppose, that Churches distant in place, and of different  
 “ languages, and under no common visible head, should  
 “ all unite in the same errors — Again, such unanimity  
 “ could never come by chance, but must be derived from one  
 “ common source: and therefore the harmony of their doctrine

[1] Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 369.



“ was in itself a pregnant argument of the truth of it [1].” But if the unanimity of the primitive Fathers must be allowed to have so great a force, as to evince the truth of any opinion, it would necessarily establish all those monstrous doctrines above specified ; since it would be difficult to produce any other whatsoever, in which there was so great an harmony among them, or so general a consent of the whole Church, through the three first centuries, and that intirely grounded upon the pretence of Apostolic tradition.

But I cannot dismiss this article of the doctrines and opinions of these ancient Fathers, without taking notice of one, which was universally received and believed through all ages of the primitive Church, *viz.* “ that there were a number  
 “ of Magicians, Necromancers or Conjurers, both among  
 “ the Gentiles and the Hæretical Christians, who had each  
 “ their particular Dæmons or evil Spirits, for their associates,  
 “ perpetually attending on their persons, and obsequious to  
 “ their commands ; by whose help they could perform miracles, foretell future events, call up the Souls of the dead, exhibit them to open view, and infuse into people whatever  
 “ dreams or visions they thought fit.” — All which is constantly affirmed by the Primitive Writers and Apologists, and commonly applied by them to prove the immortality of the Soul.

“ Let the powers of Necromancy, says *Justin Martyr*, and  
 “ the evocations of human Souls, and of boys especially,

[1] *Ibid.* p. 372, 3.

“ who



“ who had suffered violent deaths, and of those Spirits,  
 “ whom the Magicians call the Inspirers of dreams and af-  
 “ fectors, and the works, which are performed by the skill-  
 “ full in these arts, convince you, that the souls of men  
 “ exist still after death [1].”

*Lactantius*, speaking of certain Philosophers, who held,  
*that the soul perished with the body*, says, “ they durst not have  
 “ declared such an opinion, in the presence of any Magi-  
 “ cian, or if they had done it, he would have confuted them  
 “ upon the spot, by sensible experiments; by calling up  
 “ souls from the dead, and rendring them visible to hu-  
 “ man eyes, and making them speak and foretell future  
 “ events [2].”

The Author of the book, called, the *Recognitions of St. Clemens*, one of the most ancient and most learned of those many spurious pieces, which were forged by the first Christians, affirms, “ that *Simon Magus* confessed to one of  
 “ his companions, that he wrought all his amazing works,  
 “ by the help of the Soul of an healthy young boy,  
 “ who had been violently put to death for that purpose,  
 “ and then called up from the dead, by ineffable adjurati-  
 “ ons, and compelled to be his assistant [3].”

[1] Apol. 1. p. 27. Edit. Thirlb.

[2] Qui profecto non auderent de interitu animarum Mago aliquo præfente differere, qui sciret certis carminibus ciere ab Inferis animas, &c. *Divin. Institut.* l. 7: c. 13.

[3] Pueri, inquit, incorrupti & violenter necati animam adjuramentis ineffabilibus evocatam adfistere mihi feci, & per ipsam fit omne quod jubeo. lib. 2. c. XIII. Edit. Cotelerii.



*Irenæus*, giving an account of the disciples of the same *Simon*, tells us, “ that they lived lewdly, exercising magical  
 “ arts, and using exorcisms, incantations, and love-charms,  
 “ and industriously practising all other curious arts, by the as-  
 “ sistance of their familiar Spirits and Inspirers of dreams [ 1 ].”  
 And speaking afterwards of the Hæretic *Carpocrates* and his  
 followers, he says, “ These likewise practise magical arts,  
 “ with incantations and love-charms, and have their assistant  
 “ Dæmons and Inspirers of dreams, with all the other ma-  
 “ levolevolent Spirits [ 2 ].”

“ The Magicians, says *Clemens of Alexandria*, boast of Dæ-  
 “ mons, as the Ministers of their impiety, reckoning them  
 “ part of their family, and forcing them by their incanta-  
 “ tions, to be the slaves of their will [ 3 ].”

*Tertullian* declares of these Dæmons, “ that they had the  
 “ power of inflicting horrible diseases both on the minds and  
 “ bodies of men, and even cruel deaths ; yet they fre-  
 “ quently contrived to cure the disorders which they had  
 “ wrought, in order to support the credit of their divinity,  
 “ and the honor of their Altars, and secure to themselves  
 “ their proper food and nourishment from the rich steams

[ 1 ] Igitur horum Mystici Sacerdotes libidinosæ quidem vivunt ; Magias au-  
 tem perficiunt——exorcismus & incantationibus utuntur, &c. Adv. Hæres. l. i.  
 c. xx.

[ 2 ] Artes etiam Magicas operantur & ipsi, & incantationes & philtrea. Quo-  
 que & charitesia, & paredros, & oneirepompos & reliquas malignationes, &c.—  
 ib. c. xxix.

[ 3 ] Μάγοι δὲ ἤδη ἀσεβείας τῆς σφῶν αὐτῶν ἰσχυράς δαίμονας αὐχῶσιν.  
 &c. Cohort. ad Gent. p. 52. Edit. Potter.



“ and blood of the victims, which were offered to them [1].”  
 For this likewise, as monstrous as it is, was the common opinion of all the Fathers, taken, as usual, upon trust, from the authority of *Justin Martyr*, who was probably the inventor of it, “ that the Dæmons, after they had given themselves up to their lusts and lewd debaucheries with boys and women, began to want the rich fumes and the fat of sacrifices, to strengthen them for the enjoyment of their lustfull pleasures [2].”

*Cyprian* affirms, “ that they commonly lay lurking within the statues and images of the Heathen Deities; inspired the breasts of the Southsayers; animated the fibres of the entrails of victims; directed the flight of birds, and the chances of lots; involving falsehood always with truth, and themselves sometimes deceived, as well as deceiving others; disquieted the lives of men; disturbed their sleep; excited terrors in their minds, convulsions in their bodies; destroyed health, and brought on diseases, so as to force people to worship them; that being filled and fatted by the steams of Altars and burnt sacrifices, they might seem

[1] Itaque corporibus quidem & valetudines infligunt, & aliquos casus acerbos; animæ vero repentinos, & extraordinarios per vim excessus.—Ut sibi pabula propria nidoris & sanguinis procuret.—Benefici plane & circa cûras valetudinum. Lædunt enim primo, dehinc remedia præcipiunt. *Apologet. c. 22.* Pluribus notum est Dæmoniorum quoque opera & immaturas, & atroces effici mortes.—*De Anim. c. 57.*

[2] “Ὁν ἐνδεεῖς γεγόνασι μετὰ τὸ πάθειν ἐπιθυμιῶν δαλωθῆναι, &c. *Apol. p. 113.* Edit Thirlb.



“ to cure the maladies, which they had inflicted ; whereas  
 “ all the cure, which they performed, was by ceasing onely  
 “ to do hurt [1].”

And as the whole system of Pagan Idolatry was believed by the Fathers, to have been managed by the craft and agency of Dæmons, so the whole art of Magic was supposed also to be carried on by the same powers, for the sake of deluding and destroying mankind. In the case of idolatry, they imagined them to assume the names, and to act the parts of the Heathen Gods, and in Magic to assume the forms of departed souls, and to appear under the names of those, who were called up from the dead ; and as such, to foretell future events, and answer to all questions, which should be demanded of them. And the reason which they give, why the souls called up from the dead, were chiefly of those, who had been put to a violent death, is, because such spirits were generally thought to be the most malevolent and revengeful, and ready to perpetrate the same acts of violence on others, which they themselves had injuriously suffered [2].

Now the opinion, which I have here explained, is not only a proof of the grossest credulity, but of that peculiar

[1] Hi ergo Spiritus sub statuis & imaginibus consecratis delitescunt. Hi a flatu suo Vatum pectora inspirant, &c. De Idolor. Van. p. 206.

[2] Itaque invocantur quidem aori & Biæothanati, sub illo fidei argumento, quod credibile videatur, eas potissimum animas ad vim & injuriam facere, quas per vim & injuriam sævus & immaturus finis extorsit, quasi ad vicem offensæ. Tert. de anim. c. 57. Cypr. ib. 206.



species of it, which, of all others, lays a man the most open to the delusive arts of Impostors. For a mind, so totally possessed by superstitious fancies, and disturbed by vain terrors, could not have either the judgement to discern, or the inclination to examine, or the courage even to suspect the pretensions of those vagrant Jugglers, who, in those primitive ages, were so numerous, and so industriously employed in the affair of deluding their fellow creatures. Every man will perceive, how easy it must have been to men of that class, whether Heathens, Jews, or Christians, (for they are all allowed to have had such Impostors among them) to impose the tricks of their art, as the effects of a supernatural power, on a multitude already persuaded, that they lived on magic ground, exposed at every step to snares and charms, contrived by malicious Spirits, perpetually haunting them, and watching every unguarded moment, to get possession both of their souls and bodies [1]. And when pious Christians are arrived to this pitch of credulity, as to believe, that evil spirits or evil men can work real miracles, in defiance and opposition to the authority of the Gospel, their very piety will oblige them, to admit as miraculous, whatever is pretended to be wrought in the defence of it, and so make them of course the implicit dupes of their own wonder-workers.

IV. I shall now procede, as I proposed, to take a particular review of all the several gifts, or miraculous powers,

[1] Nam & suggestimus nullum pæne hominem carere Dæmonio. Tert. ib.  
which



which were actually claimed, and pretended to have been possessed by the primitive Church : which, according to the testimonies produced above, were, *the power of raising the dead ; of healing the sick ; of casting out Devils ; of prophesying ; of seeing visions ; of discovering the secrets of men ; of expounding the scriptures ; of speaking with tongues.*

Sect. I. As to the first, and the principal indeed of all miracles, that of raising the dead ; it was frequently performed, as *Irenæus* affirms, *on necessary occasions ; and men so raised had lived afterwards among them many years ;* but it is very strange, that from the time of the Apostles, there is not an Instance of this miracle to be found in the three first centuries ; except a single case, slightly intimated by *Eusebius*, from the books of *Papias* ; which he seems to rank, among the other fabulous stories delivered by that weak man [1].

It is certain, that if a miracle of so surprizing a nature, had been so frequent, as *Irenæus* affirms it to have been ; or performed, as it were, in every parish, or place where there was a Christian Church, it must have made great noise in the world, and been celebrated, not onely by the primitive Fathers, but by all the Historians of those times. But it was so far from being commonly or openly effected, as every

[1] Νεκρὸν γὰρ ἀνάστασιν, καὶ αὐτὸν γεγονυῖαν ἰσορεῖ. καὶ αὖ πάλιν ἕτερον παράδοξον περὶ Ἰῆσον, &c. Hist. Eccl. 3. 39.



miracle should necessarily be, which is wrought for the conversion of Infidels, that all the enemies of the Gospel, as *Irenæus* himself confesses, constantly affirmed *the thing itself to be impossible* [1]. A sure proof, that they had never seen or known it to be done, unless in such a manner, as carried with it a strong suspicion of fraud or collusion. Mr. *Dodwell* however, from this single authority of *Irenæus*, asserts the miraculous powers of the second century, to be superior even to those of the first, or Apostolic age. *They raised the dead*, says he, *in the Apostolic Churches; yet we have few examples of it, in the genuin acts of the Apostles: but in Irenæus's days, they raised not a few, but very often* [2]. And in the same strain he runs through all the other miracles of the primitive times, and gives them the preference, in their number at least, to those of the Apostles; yet is forced to own, after all, that towards the end of the second century, and while *Irenæus* himself might be still living, this power of raising the dead was lost and vanished. For in the very same age, when one *Autolycus*, an eminent heathen, challenged his friend *Theophilus*, Bishop of *Antioch*, a convert and champion of the Gospel, to shew him but one person, who had been raised from the dead, on the condition of turning Christian himself upon it; *Theophilus* discovers by his answer, that he was not

[1] *Tantum enim absunt ab eo, ut mortuum ipsi excitent, ut ne quidem credant, hoc in totum posse fieri.* Iren. l. 2. c. 56.

[2] *Excitabant mortuos in Ecclesiis Apostolicis, quos tamen raros legimus,—excitabant similiter mortuos fraternitates Irenæi,—nec illos tamen adeo raros sed sæpissime.* Dissert. 2. in Iren. § XLII. p. 165.



able to give him that satisfaction [1]. Upon which Mr. *Dodwell* remarks, *that the great number of persons, who had been raised some years before, when the fact was common, were dead again for the second time in this interval*; which, for the sake of his hypothesis, he stretches, as well as he can, to *forty years* [2]. But in truth, the fact itself, as delivered by *Irenæus*, seems to be utterly incredible on many accounts: 1st, that a case of so wonderful a nature, should be common among them, yet not a single instance of it particularly described, or clearly attested in all history. 2dly, That it should be performed in every part of the world, where there was a Church or assembly of Christians; yet all those, who were not of that Church, and for whose sake it was chiefly performed, should be insisting all the while, *that the thing itself was impossible*. 3dly, That it should be common in the days of *Irenæus*, yet *Theophilus*, who lived at the same time, should not be able to alledge a single instance of it, when challenged to it by his friend, whom he was laboring to convert, and who offered to be converted upon the proof of that fact. Lastly, that a power, of all others, the most affecting and reputable to the Church, should be withdrawn at a time,

[1] Φησὶ γὰρ, δεῖξόν μοι καὶ ἓνα ἐγεγέρτα ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἵνα ἰδὼν πιστώσω, &c. *Theoph. ad Autol.* l. i. p. 77. c. *Ad finem Oper. Just. Mart. Paris.* 1639. *Defecere item mortuorum excitationes.* Certe Autolyco roganti vel unum ostenderet qui fuisset e mortuis revocatus, ita respondit *Theophilus*, quasi vel unum demonstrare minime potuerit. *Dissert. in Iren.* 2. § XLIV. p. 171.

[2] Quo temporis intervallo rursus obierint, qui sub initium *Marci Aurelii* fuissent in vitam revocati. *ibid.*



when it's adversaries were defying them to shew any effects of it, and putting the merits of the controversy upon that very issue [1]. All which circumstances laid together, must needs leave the strongest suspicion on the claim of the primitive Church, with regard to this prime miracle of *raising the dead*.

Sect. 2. The next gift said to have resided in it, is that of *healing the sick and curing all sorts of diseases*: in favor of which the ancient testimonies are more full and express; tho' with some variation, concerning the method of cure. Some affirm, that it was done by *the imposition of hands* [2]: some, by *invoking the name of God, and of Jesus, and reciting some story of his life* [3]. And others, by the use of oil: which was consecrated by Holy men, and dispensed to the people for the cure of their diseases. *Tertullian* tells us, "that a  
" Christian called *Proculus* cured the Emperor *Severus* of a  
" certain distemper by the use of oil: for which service that  
" Emperor was favorable afterwards to the Christians, and

[1] This shews the vanity of that distinction, which some are apt to make, between the primitive, and the Popish miracles; that the first were wrought for the sake, and in the midst of unbelievers; the last among the faithful onely. Contra, recentiorum pleraque in *fideles*; in infideles paucissima, edita feruntur. Dodw. ib. § LXIII.

[2] "Ἄλλοι δὲ τὰς κάμνουσας διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν ἰῶνται. Iren. l. 2. c. 57.

[3] Οὐδὲν ἄλλο καλῶντες ἐπὶ τῆς δεομένης θεραπέας, ἢ τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι Θεόν, καὶ τὸ τῷ Ἰησοῦ ὄνομα, μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ ἰστορίας. Con. Celf. l. 3. p. 124.



“ kept *Proculus*, as long as he lived, in his palace [1].” And St. *Jerom* affirms, “ that *Hilarion the Monk* used to heal “ all the wounds of the Husbandmen and Shepherds with “ *consecrated oil* ; and preserved the life of the son-in-law “ and daughter of an holy woman called *Constantia*, by an- “ ointing them with the same [2].” Yet these cures, if true, might be accounted for probably without a miracle, by the natural power and efficacy of the oil itself, since in our days, the bite of vipers, after inflaming a man’s arm to a degree, which threatened destruction to him, is known to have been checked and cured in a short time by the application of oil : which might perhaps have been the very case of *Hilarion’s Shepherds*. But be that as it will, the pretence of curing diseases by a miraculous power, was so successfully maintained in the heathen world by fraud and craft, that when it came to be challenged by the Christians, it was not capable of exciting any attention to it, among those, who themselves pretended to the same power ; which, tho’ the certain effect of imposture, was yet managed with so much art, that the Christians could neither deny nor detect it ; but

[1] Ipse etiam Severus,—Christianorum memor fuit. Nam & *Proculum* Christianum, qui eum per oleum aliquando curaverat, requisivit, & in palatio suo habuit usque ad mortem ejus. Ad Scapul. § 4.

[2] *Benedicto itaque oleo*, universi agricolæ atque pastores, tangentes vulnera, certam salutem resumebant. Hieron. in Vit. Hilarion. Oper. Tom. 4. Par. 2. p. 86.

Sed & *Constantia* quædam, sancta fœmina, cujus generum & filiam de morte liberaverat *unctione olei*. ibid. p. 90.



insisted always, that it was performed by *Dæmons* or evil Spirits, deluding mankind to their ruin : and from the supposed reality of the fact, inferred the reasonableness of believing, what was more credibly affirmed by the Christians, to be performed by the power of the true God. *We do not deny*, says *Athenagoras*, that *in different places, cities, and countries, there are some extraordinary works performed in the name of idols, from which some have received benefit, others harm*. But then he goes on to prove, that they were not performed by God, but by *Dæmons* [1]. If I should allow, says *Origen*, “ that there is a *Dæmon* cunning in medicine, called “ *Æsculapius*, who cures diseases : yet I would say to those, “ who are surprized at it, as well as at the prædictions of “ *Apollo*, that if the cure of diseases and prædiction of “ events be things of an indifferent nature, and which be- “ long to bad, as well as to good beings ; shew me that “ those, who cure and foretell, are not bad, but good, and “ worthy to be held in a manner as Gods [2].”

Whatever proof then the Primitive Church might have among themselves of this miraculous gift, yet it could have but little effect towards making profelytes among those, who pretended to the same gift ; possessed more largely, and ex-

[1] Τὸ μὲν δὲ κατὰ τόπους καὶ πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη γίνεσθαι τινὰς ἐπ’ οὐνόματι εἰδώ-  
λων ἐνεργείας, ὃδ’ ἡμεῖς ἀντιλέγομεν. &c. *Athenag. Apol.* p. 25.

[2] Ἰνα δὲ καὶ δῶ, Ἰατρικόν τινα Δαίμονα θεραπεύειν σώματα, τὸν καλέμενον  
Ἀσκληπιόν. εἰποίμ’ ἂν πρὸς τὰς θαυμάζουσας τὸ τοιοῦτο. &c. *Con. Cels.* l.  
3. p. 124.



erted more openly, than in the private assemblies of the Christians. For in the Temples of *Æsculapius*, all kinds of diseases were believed to be publicly cured, by the pretended help of that Deity : in proof of which there were erected in each Temple *columns or tables of brass or marble*, on which a distinct narrative of each particular cure was inscribed. *Pausanias* writes, “ that in the Temple at *Epidaurus*, there  
 “ were many columns anciently of this kind, and six of  
 “ them remaining to his time, inscribed with the names  
 “ of men and women, who had been cured by the God,  
 “ with an account of their several cases and the method of  
 “ their cure : and that there was an old pillar besides,  
 “ which stood apart, dedicated to the memory of *Hippolytus*,  
 “ who had been raised from the dead [1].” *Strabo* also, another grave writer, informs us, “ that these Temples were con-  
 “ stantly filled with the sick, imploring the help of the God :  
 “ and that they had tables hanging around them, in which  
 “ all the miraculous cures were described [2].” There is a remarkable fragment of one of these tables still extant, and exhibited by *Gruter* in his collection, as it was found in the ruins of *Æsculapius’s* Temple, in the island of the Tyber, in Rome ; which gives an account of two blind men restored to

[1] Στήλαι δ' εἰσθήκεσαν ἐνὸς τῆ περιβόλου, τὸ μὲν ἀρχαίου καὶ πλείονες, ἐπ' ἑμῶν δὲ ἕξ λοιπαὶ. &c. *Corinth.* l. 2. c. xxvii.

[2] Καὶ τὸ ἱερόν πλῆρες ἔχοντο αἰεὶ τῶν τε καμνόντων, καὶ τῶν ἀνακειμένων πινάκων, ἐν οἷς ἀναγεγραμμένω τυγχάνουσι αἱ θεραπεῖαι. *Strab.* l. 8. p. 575. Edit. Amstel.



*sight by Æsculapius, in the open view, and with the loud acclamations of the people, acknowledging the manifest power of the God. Upon which the learned Montfaucon makes this reflection, that in this are seen, either the wiles of the Devil, or the tricks of Pagan Priests, suborning men to counterfeit diseases and miraculons cures [1].*

Now tho' nothing can support the belief and credit of miracles more authentically, than public monuments, erected in proof and memory of them, at the time when they were performed ; yet in defiance of that authority, it is certain, that all those heathen miracles were pure forgeries contrived to delude the credulous multitude. And in truth ; this particular claim of *curing diseases miraculously*, affords great room for such a delusion, and a wide field for the exercise of craft. Every man's experience has taught him, that diseases thought fatal and desperate, are oft surprizingly healed of themselves, by some secret and sudden effort of nature, impenetrable to the skill of man : but to ascribe this presently to a miracle, as weak and superstitious minds are apt to do ; to the prayers of the living, or the intercessions of the dead ; is what neither sound reason, nor true religion will justify. Wherefore when the narratives of these pretended cures are delivered to us by partial and interested, or by weak and credulous men, they will always furnish reason to suspect, that the relators were either deluded themselves, or willing to de-

[1] See Monfauc. Antiqu. Tom. 2, par. 1, l. 4, c. 6, it, Gruter. Inscr. p. LXXI.



lude others : and unless we knew more precisely in this case the real bounds between nature and miracle, we cannot pay any great regard to such stories ; especially when we are informed at the same time by the Christians themselves, that the same cures were performed also by Knaves and Impostors, of all sects and nations ; by *Heathens*, *Jews*, and *Heretics* ; which according to the principles of those days, were ascribed either to the power of *Dæmons*, or to the magical force of amulets and charms.

SECT. 3. But the most eminent and celebrated of all the miraculous powers of the primitive Church was, the gift of *casting out Devils*, or the cure of *Dæmoniacs*. To this the ancient Fathers and Apologists make the most frequent appeals ; and on this they lay the greatest stress, towards evincing the divinity of the Christian Religion. It is not easy however to collect from their accounts, what was the real case of these *Dæmoniacs*, and the proper nature of their malady. The Fathers indeed themselves seem to have been fully persuaded, and labor to persuade every body else, that they were actually possessed and tormented by Devils, or evil Spirits : yet many learned men of modern times have imagined them rather to have been affected by the *Epilepsy*, or *falling sickness*. Mr. *Dodwell* himself takes their case to have been of this kind, and curable by the ordinary way of medicine, as well



well as the extraordinary one of miracle [1]. And it is certain, that the effects constantly ascribed to it, seem to be nothing else but the ordinary symptoms of an *Epilepsy*, as they are described by the Physicians. *Justin* speaks of them as being thrown down always to the ground, by the Devils who possessed them [2]: And *Chrysostom*, in his elaborate consolation to *Stagirus*, who was also possessed, recites all the particulars of his case, as they were related to him by a common friend; the convulsion of his hands, the distortion of his eyes, the foam of his mouth, his horrid and inarticulate voice, the tremor of his body, and the long privation of his senses [3]. *St. Gregory of Nyssa*, speaking of a woman also in the same case, says, that groaning with a terrible and inarticulate voice, different from human, she fell flat on the ground, tearing her hair, her eyes distorted, her mouth foaming: nor did the Devil desist

[1] Morbum itaque caducum, quem Comitiale seu Regium appellant, curabant passim exorcismis suis coævi *Tertulliano* Christiani. Nec enim ego alium censuerim, quo laborarint *Dæmoniaci illi a Dæmone præcipitati*. — Nihil enim impedit, quo minus iidem per medicinam possint etiam curari. — Dissert. in Iren. 2. § XLVII. p. 175.

[2] Καὶ οἱ ψυχαῖς ἀποθανόντων λαμβανόμενοι καὶ ῥιπτόμενοι ἄνθρωποι, ἔς δαιμονολήπτας καὶ μαινομένους καλῶσι πάντες. *Apol.* 1. p. 28.

[3] Τὴν σρέβλωσιν τῶν χειρῶν, τὴν διαστροφὴν τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, τὸν ἀπὸ τῆς στόματος ἀφρὸν, &c. *Tom.* 1. p. 156. E. Edit. Benedict.

Ita etiam *Plinius*, corruens morbo comitali. [*Hist. N.* 28: 6.] atque ita quoque *S. Cyprianus* — irrepentes in corporibus occulte, mentes terrent, membra distorquent, valetudinem frangunt, &c. *De Idolor.* Van. p. 206.



*from strangling her, &c.* [1] Then as to what these Fathers declare, concerning their power of *lashing, burning and tormenting* the Devils ; and of their *groaning and howling* under the torture of the Christian exorcism, such an imagination might easily be conceived, from the strange convulsions of the body, and the hollow sighs and groans which commonly attend such fits. And the other circumstances likewise, so constantly attested by them all, concerning *the speeches and confessions of the Devils ; their answering to all questions ; owning themselves to be wicked spirits ; telling whence they came, and whither they were going, and pleading for favor and ease from the hands of the Exorcists,* may not improbably be accounted for, either by the disordered state of the patient, answering wildly and at random to any questions proposed, or by the arts of imposture and contrivance between the parties concerned in the act.

This, I dare say, will appear probable to every impartial reader, who, from the credulous and enthusiastic disposition of these Fathers, and their preconceived and erroneous notions about the origin and power of Dæmons, will be apt to conclude, that they were either induced by their prejudices, to give too hasty a credit to these pretended possessions ; or carried away by their zeal, to assist even in supporting a delusion, which was useful to the Christian cause. And tho'

[1] Πνεύματι δαιμονίῳ σρεβλωθεῖσα, καὶ βρυχηθμιῶ θηριώδει παρὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φωνὴν ἀνοιμώξασα, πίπτει πρηνὴς &c. in Vit. Greg. Thaum. p. 973. B. Oper. Edit. Paris.



this may sound harsh in the ears of many, it will not appear strange to those, who have given any attention to the history of mankind; which will always suggest this sad reflection; that the greatest zealots in religion, or the leaders of sects and parties, whatever purity or principles they pretend to, have seldom scrupled to make use of a commodious lie, for the advancement, of what they call the truth. And with regard to these very Fathers, there is not one of them, as an eminent writer of ecclesiastical history declares, who made any scruple in those ages, of using *the hyperbolical style*, to advance the honor of God, and the salvation of men [4]. For it is certain, that the greatest part of the wonderfull things, which they relate, are in themselves utterly incredible; and such of them as happen to be the most distinctly described, carry always the greatest marks of art and contrivance, for the sake of serving some particular purpose. For example, *Tertullian*, who was an utter enemy to plays and public shews in the Theaters, wrote a book, to deter all Christians from frequenting them, in which he tells the following story: “ An example happened, says he, as the Lord is witness, of a woman, who went to the Theater, and came back with a Devil in her: whereupon when the unclean spirit was urged and threatened in the office of exorcising, for having dared to attack one of the faithfull; *I have done nothing*, replied he, *but what is*

[4] In honorem Dei, salutemque hominum, hyperbolica oratione uti, nemo tunc temporis religioni ducebat. Jo. Cleric. Hist. Eccles. p. 681.



“ *very fair, for I found her on my own ground.*” He adds a second story still more dreadful, “ of another woman, who, “ in the very night, after she had seen a tragedy in the “ Theater, had her winding-sheet shewn to her in a vi- “ sion, in which she was reproached by name, with the “ Tragedian, whom she had been seeing, and did not live “ above five days after [1].”

Now in this last case, it is not improbable, that a poor weak woman, who went to sleep, under the consciousness of a grievous sin committed by her, might, by the terrors of a dream, be thrown into a disorder, that put an end to her life. But in the first, tho’ God himself is appealed to, for the truth of it, yet when we reflect on the principles of those times, and the particular warmth of *Tertullian’s* zeal, we cannot but suspect, that the smart answer of the Devil, was contrived to enforce, what he was so warmly inculcating, the horrible sin and dangerous consequence of frequenting the public Theaters.

It is very remarkable, that all the Fathers, who lay so great a stress on this particular gift of casting out Devils, yet allow the same power both to the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, as well before, as after our Saviour’s coming. *Justin Martyr*, in his dialogue with *Trypho* the *Jew*, says, “ that all

[1] Nam & exemplum accidit Domino teste, ejus mulieris, quæ theatrum adiit, & inde cum Dæmonio rediit. Itaque in exorcismo, cum oneraretur immundus spiritus, quod ausus esset fidelem adgredi; constanter & justissime quidem, inquit, feci, in meo eam inveni, &c.—De Spectac. 26.



“ Devils yield and submit to the name of *Jesus*, when they  
 “ would not, to any other name of their Kings, Prophets  
 “ or Patriarchs : yet if any should exorcise them in the  
 “ name of the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, they  
 “ would in like manner submit. For your Exorcists, adds  
 “ he, as well as the Gentiles, use this art in exorcising, to-  
 “ gether with certain fumes, and ligatures [1].” And the  
*Jews*, says *Irenæus*, even now, by this same invocation of  
 the name of God, drive away Devils [2].

*Origen*, in his dispute with *Celsus*, asserting the descent of  
 the *Jews* from *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, says, “ that  
 “ these names joined to that of God, have such power, that  
 “ not onely their own nation use them in their prayers, and  
 “ in casting out Devils, but all other Inchantors, and Magi-  
 “ cians whatsoever : and that in magical books, the same  
 “ invocation and use of God’s name is often found, as pe-  
 “ culiar to the art, and effectual against Devils [3].” And  
 speaking of *Abraham*’s great merit, he observes, “ that it is  
 “ not *Moses* onely, who celebrates it, but that many of  
 “ those, who charm or drive out Devils, call upon the God  
 “ of *Abraham*, without knowing even who *Abraham*

[1] Ἦδη μέντοι οἱ ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐπορεύσασιν τῇ τέχνῃ ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη χρώμενοι ἐξορκίζουσι, καὶ θυμιάμασι καὶ καλιδέσμοις χρῶνται. Dial. par. 2. p. 321.

[2] Et propter hoc Judæi usque nunc hac ipsa adfatione Dæmonas effugant. — l. 2. c. 5. p. 123.

[3] Ὡν τοσούτον δύναται τὰ ὀνόματα συναπλόμενα τῇ τῷ Θεῷ προσηγορίᾳ, ὥς ὁ μόνον τὸς ἀπὸ τῷ ἔθνους χρῆσθαι ἐν ταῖς πρὸς Θεὸν εὐχαῖς, καὶ ἐν τῷ καλιδέσει δαίμονας, &c. Con. Celf. l. 4. p. 183, 84.



“ was [1].” Again, “ if a man, says he, invoke or exorcise by the name of the God of *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, the Devils will obey, and do what they are commanded; but if he translate those names, according to their meaning, into any other language, they will have no force at all. The same, adds he, is true of the word, *Sabaoth*, so much used in incantations: if it be applied in it's original *Hebrew*, it is effectual: but if translated into another tongue, so as to put for it, *the Lord of Hosts*, it avails nothing, if we believe the skillfull in these matters [2].”

*Josephus* writes, “ that *Solomon* was particularly instructed by God in the art of casting out Devils, for the benefit of mankind; and that he left behind him a receipt of those charms and exorcisms, by which he used to drive

[1] Διὸ παραλαμβάνουσ τὴν, θεὸς Ἀβραάμ, λέξιν, ἣν ἐπιστάμενοι δὲ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ Ἀβραάμ. *ibid.* l. 1. p. 17.

[2] Τὰ δὲ ὅμοιον ἐρῶμεν καὶ περὶ τῆς Σαβαώθ φωνῆς πολλαχῇ τῶν ἐπωδῶν παραλαμβάνομένης. ὅτι εἰ μεταλαμβάνομεν τὸ ὄνομα εἰς τὸ, κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων. — ἂν ποιεῖσόμεν, *ib.* l. 5. p. 262.

*N. B.* From what is here said by *Origen*, and the other Fathers, it appears; that the power of casting out Devils, was considered as a peculiar gift, or art rather, grounded on certain rules, which were taught and delivered in books; and was common both to the Jews and the Heathens, as well as to the Christians; and, among them all, was administered by a particular set of men, called *Exorcists*: who about the time of *Origen's* death, or the middle of the third Century, began to be reckoned among the inferior orders of the Church: [Vid. *Euseb.* l. 6. c. 43.] The form of whose ordination is given us by the learned *Bingham*: [Antiqu. lib. 3. c. 4. § 5.]

“ them



“ them out: which same method was the most effectual even  
 “ to his time. For I saw, says he, one of my countrymen,  
 “ *Eleazar*, casting out Devils, in the presence of *Vespasian*, his  
 “ sons and officers, and a multitude of soldiers. His me-  
 “ thod was this: he applied to the nose of a person pos-  
 “ sessed, a ring, which had a certain drug or root under  
 “ the seal of it, which *Solomon* had prescribed; and so,  
 “ by the smell of the ring, he drew out the Devil, through  
 “ the nostrils of the patient; who fell presently to the  
 “ ground; upon which, he adjured the Devil never to return,  
 “ rehearsing the name of *Solomon*, with certain charms,  
 “ which he had composed and left behind him; and being  
 “ desirous to convince the company, that he was really in-  
 “ dued with this power, to which he pretended, he placed  
 “ a certain cup or vessel filled with water, at a little di-  
 “ stance from the person possessed, and commanded the De-  
 “ vil, as he was going out of him, to overturn the cup, so  
 “ as to give the spectators a manifest proof, that he had  
 “ quitted the body of the man [1].” Which shews, in  
 contradiction to what *Justin Martyr* affirmed above, that  
 besides the name of *Jesus*, the Devils were subject likewise  
 to that of *Solomon*.

Now it will be granted, I suppose, by all men of sense,  
 that these *Jewish* and *Gentile* Exorcists were mere Knaves  
 and Impostors; who, by their tricks and false miracles,

[1] Καὶ αὐτὴ μέχρι νῦν παρ’ ἡμῶν ἡ Θεραπεία πλεῖστον ἰσχύει. ἰσόρησα γάρ  
 τινα Ελεάζαρον, &c. *Antiq. Jud.* l. viii. c. 2. § 5.



contrived to delude the credulous multitude, in order to acquire gain or power to themselves, and to keep their people firm to the *Jewish* or Heathenish rites, in opposition to the Christian. *Ulpian* the lawyer speaks of *Exorcism* in general, as a term of art used by Impostors : by whom he is supposed by some, to mean the *Jewish*, by others, the *Christian Exorcists* [3]. But *Tertullian*, and all the Fathers in general declare, that these Magicians and wandering Jugglers performed many wonderfull things, above the force of human power, which they wholly ascribe to the assistance of Dæmons. And if they were so far deluded by those *Jewish* and Gentile pretenders, as to take such senseless charms, and tricks of legerdemain, for the effects of a supernatural power, their prejudices would operate much more strongly in favor of their own Impostors, who had taken up the same trade : or if they saw through the cheat of the Gentile practitioners, yet on account of the credit, which they had gained with the people, and the difficulty of detecting the fraud, they might think it convenient perhaps, to oppose one cheat to another, and set up rival powers of their own, in opposition to those of their adversaries, in hopes of beating them at their own weapons.

For it is very hard to believe, what *Origen* declares above, that the Devils, for the sake of doing the greater mischief to men, *used to possess and destroy their cattel*. In confirmation

[3] Bingham. Antiqu. B. 5. c. 4. § 3.



of which, St. *Jerom* has related a most ridiculous story, in his life of St. *Hilarion* the Monk : where after a narrative of many cases of Devils, expelled by that saint from the bodies of men, he adds, “ but it is to little purpose to talk of  
“ men ; brute animals also were dayly brought to him,  
“ mad or possessed : among the rest, a *Bactrian Camel*, of  
“ an enormous size, which had already destroyed many people : above thirty men were employed to drag him along  
“ with the strongest ropes. His eyes were bloody ; his  
“ mouth foaming ; his tongue rolling and swoln ; and his  
“ strange roaring above all terrors : the old man ordered it  
“ be let loose : upon which all, who were about him, ran  
“ away immediately : the saint came forward alone, and in  
“ the *Syriac* tongue, said, *thou dost not, affright me, Devil,*  
“ *with all that bulk of body : thou art one and the same in a*  
“ *little fox, or in a camel :* and so he stood firm with his  
“ arm stretched out ; and as the beast advanced towards  
“ him, furious and ready to devour him, it presently fell  
“ down with it's head to the ground ; so that all present  
“ were amazed at the sudden change, from so great a fierceness, to such a tameness. Upon which the old man took  
“ occasion to teach them, that the Devil used to seize cattel,  
“ out of his hatred to men, to whom he bore so great a  
“ grudge, as to wish, not onely that they, but that all  
“ which they had, might perish.” To this story I cannot forbear adding, what is likewise affirmed by the same *Jerom*, of the same *Hilarion* ; that *he was so full of the power of the*



*Holy Spirit, as to be able to discover, from the smell of the bodies and the cloaths of men, or of any thing else, which they had but touched, to what particular Dæmon, or to what vice they were severally subject.* Now tho' this good Father invokes the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in his attempt to describe a life so wonderfull; yet all, who read it, must needs be persuaded, that out of his zeal and warm affection to the Monkish Order, which he professed, and from a desire to advance it's credit in the world, he either wholly invented, or at least willfully propagated all these extravagant tales, which he himself could not possibly believe: "The time, says he, " would fail me, if I should attempt to relate all the wonderfull works, that were performed by him—wherefore " by the influence of his Example, *innumerable Monasteries* " *began to be founded through all Palæstine*; and all the " Monks ran eagerly to *Hilarion, &c. [1].*" This was the real purpose of St. *Jerom's* zeal; this the fruit of his fictitious miracles. But to return to the *Dæmoniacs*. Since this gift of casting out Devils is what the Fathers, as I have said above, lay the greatest stress upon, and to which they make the most frequent appeals, it may be proper to strengthen what I have already been declaring upon it, by a few particular observations, which I would recommend to the attention of the reader.

[1] Vid. Oper. Tom. 4. par. 2. p. 82, 83, &c.

Tempus me deficiet, si voluero universa signa, quæ ab eo perpetrata sunt, dicere.—Exemplo itaque ejus innumerable Monasteria per totum Palæstinam esse cœperunt, & ad eum omnes Monachi certatim currere, &c.



1<sup>st</sup>, That there is such an uniformity in all the primitive accounts of them, tho' given by different Fathers and in different ages, *of the Devils being scourged, burned, and tortured by the Christian Exorcists; and of their howlings, discourses and confessions*, that they all seem to have been cast in the same mould; and to have been the copies rather of one original story, transcribed by the later writers from the earlier, than the natural descriptions, of what each of them had severally seen, at different times, and in distant places [1].

2<sup>dly</sup>, That the persons thus possessed, and in whom the Devils used to hold discourses, were called by the primitive Christians, Ἐγγαστριμῦθοι or *Ventriloquists*; because they were believed *to speak out of the belly, thro' the navel* [2]. Thus in a book ascribed to *Justin Martyr*, containing a number of Quæstions, with answers to them, for the use of the *Orthodox*, one of the Quæstions is this; “ if all the arts  
“ of delusion are abolished by the coming of Christ, how  
“ comes it to pass, that Dæmons still speak by those, who are  
“ called *Ventriloquists*, and that they do not make Christianity  
“ ridiculous and contemptible, by shewing forth the works  
“ of imposture, and uttering oracular prædictions in the  
“ bodies of Christians [3]?”

[1] See what I have collected above on this subject, from *Tertullian*, *Minucius Felix*, *Cyprian*, and *Lactantius*. Thus Mr. *Whiston* also observes, *that a good deal of what is said upon it by Minucius Felix, is made use of by Cyprian, soon after his time, and that almost verbatim.* Account of the *Dæmoniacs*, p. 42

[2] See Bing. Antiqu. l. 16. c. 5. §. 4.

[3] Vid. Quæst. & Respons. ad Orthodox. Quæst. 8.



Now many of us have seen, and may still see perhaps at this day, a sort of these *Ventriloquists*, who by a particular formation of their organs, managed by art and practice, could speak in such a manner, as to persuade the company, that the voice did not proceed from them, but from some invisible being: which they could direct likewise so, as to make it seem to come, from what part of the room they pleased: by which means, weak and ignorant people have been terrified almost out of their senses, believing it, to be the *voice of a Spirit or Dæmon*. If we suppose then, that there were any Artists of this kind among those ancient Christians, as there undoubtedly were among the ancient Gentiles, it is easy to imagine, what strange and surprizing feats might be performed, by a correspondence between the *Ventriloquist* and the *Exorcist*, so as to delude the most sensible and sagacious of their audience, prepossessed with the belief of these diabolical possessions, and void of all suspicion, that such effects could possibly be produced by any human art or natural cause.

3dly, From the testimony of Antiquity itself it is evident, that many of their Dæmoniacs could not possibly be cured by all the power of the Exorcists; and that the cures, which are pretended to have been wrought on any, were but temporary, and appear to have been the cessation rather of a particular fit, or access of the distemper, than the real expulsion of a Dæmon. This may be clearly collected from the method of treating them in the primitive Church, as



it was regulated by several Canons and rules, made for that purpose by Bishops and Councils, injoining: “ that they  
“ should not be received to baptism, but in the intervals of  
“ their disorder ; nor to the Communion, unless they shewed  
“ signs of piety and sobriety, so as not to expose and  
“ blaspheme the mysteries ; in which case they might com-  
“ municate now and then : that they should never be or-  
“ dained or taken into any order of the Clergy ; nor al-  
“ lowed to pray in common with the congregation ; but be  
“ produced always separately, and commanded onely to bow  
“ down their heads, while the rest of the Assembly were of-  
“ fering up a prayer for them.” In different Churches how-  
ever, a different discipline was observed with regard to them ;  
for in some, they were admitted to baptism, and even to  
daily communion ; by which means many are affirmed to  
have been relieved, when all the arts of the Exorcists had been  
tried upon them in vain [1]. Now these cases manifestly  
shew, that this celebrated gift, as it was managed by the pri-  
mitive Church, was not able to work an absolute cure ; or to  
drive out the Devils so effectually, as to reduce the patients  
to a permanent state of sanity ; so as to render them or-  
dinarily capable, either of baptism, or the Eucharist, or of  
joining even with the congregation, in the daily prayers of  
the Church. Whence we may reasonably conclude ; that it  
was nothing else, but a false mimickry of that genuin power,

[1] See Bingham. Antiquit. book XI. c. v. § III. it, ibid. book. xv. c. iv. §  
xvi. it. ib. xvii. c. v. § III, &c.

which



which was exercised by our Lord, and conferred afterwards on his Apostles : a power which never did it's work by halves, or left it's cures imperfect. For, as we learn from the Gospel, *Mary Magdalen*, from whom *seven Devils* were cast out, continued ever after in her sober senses ; accompanying and ministring on all occasions to our Lord, to the time of his death : and the man also, out of whom a *Legion* of them was ejected, was restored at once to perfect health both of mind and body, and sent away to proclame in *Decapolis*, and the neighbouring country, the miraculous cure which *Jesus* had wrought upon him [1].

4thly, There is another circumstance belonging to these primitive Dæmoniacs, of which the reader perhaps may desire some farther explication ; I mean the great numbers of them, which appear to have subsisted in those early ages : whose chief habitation was within a part of the Church, allotted to them for that purpose ; in which, as in a kind of Hospital, they were committed to the care of the Exorcists ; whose business it was, “ to pray over them on some occasions, “ and to provide their dayly food, and keep them employ- “ ed in some bodily exercise and innocent business, of “ sweeping the Church and the like, to prevent the more “ violent agitations of Satan, and lest he should be tempted “ by their idleness to renew his attacks upon them [2].” Which method of relieving so miserable a tribe of help-

[1] Luke viii. 2. Matt. v. 20. Luke viii. 39.

[2] Bingham, book III. c. IV. § VII.



less mortals, will account for the numbers, with which the Churches were stored; as well as for the confidence of those challenges, made to the Heathens, by the Christian Apologists, to come and see at any hour, and any warning, how they could *torment, and lash, and burn, and drive the evil spirits* out of them; while they kept such numbers of them in constant pay, always ready for the shew; tried and disciplined by their Exorcists, to an habit of groaning and howling, and to give proper answers to all quæstions, which should be demanded of them.

It is observable also in the last place, that this power of *exorcising Dæmoniacs or casting out Devils*, which had hitherto been in the hands onely of the meaner sort of the Christian layety, was put under the direction of the Clergy, by the *Council of Laodicea*, about the year of Christ three hundred and sixty seven, in which it was decreed, that *none should be Exorcists, but those, who were appointed by the Bishop*. After which appropriation of it, as Mr. *Whiston* informs us, “few or none of the Clergy, nor indeed of the Layety, were any longer able to cast out Devils: so that the old Christian exorcism or prayer for the *Energumens* in the Church, began soon after to be omitted as wholly useless [1].” Which sudden failure of so eminent a gift seems to be ascribed by him to that fatal step of this *unhappy Council*, as he calls it; as if, by their presumptuous attempt to controul the divine power, they had provoked God to withdraw it. But

[1] See Mr. *Whiston's* Account of *Dæmoniacs*, p. 53.



tho' this solution of the case may be agreeable to the character and principles of that very learned and pious writer; yet it is more agreeable to reason and the experience of mankind, to suppose, that the licentious abuse of this imaginary power, by the many false and impudent pretensions, of crafty impostors on the one hand, and wrong-headed Enthusiasts on the other, had brought such scandal on Christianity itself, that the Clergy were forced at last to interpose, and take the affair into their own hands. For that this was really the case, is manifestly shewn by the event: since the exercise of this gift was no sooner subjected to any regulation, even by those, who favored and desired to support it, than it gradually decreased and expired.

§ 4. The next miraculous gift ascribed to the primitive Church, is that of *Prophetic visions, and extatic trances, and the discovery of men's hearts*: for these seem to be the fruit of one and the same spirit: which exerted itself chiefly about the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, through *Tertullian's and Cyprian's* days. “ The divine censure, says *Cyprian*, does not cease to chastise us, neither by night, nor by day, for besides nightly visions, even boys among us are filled with the Holy Ghost, and, in fits of ecstacy, see, hear, and utter things, by which the Lord thinks fit to admonish and instruct us [1].” This  
“ ecstacy

[1] Castigare nos itaque divina censura nec noctibus desinit nec diebus. Præter nocturnas enim visiones, per dies quoque impletur apud nos Spiritu sancto puerorum



ecstasy was a temporary madness or loss of senses, and is called by *Tertullian*, the *spiritual virtue*, in which prophecy consists [1]. *Suidas* says, that of all the kinds of fury or madness, that of the Poets and Prophets was alone to be wished for [2].

Mr. *Dodwell* observes, “ that visions were peculiar to the  
“ young, dreams to the old: because it required a great  
“ strength of body to support the violence of such divine agi-  
“ tations [3].” *Philo*, the Jew, treating of the same ecstasies, with which the Patriarchs and Prophets of the Old Testament used to be affected, reasons thus, “ the human  
“ mind, says he, is symbolically called the Sun by *Moses*—  
“ while our mind therefore shines, and exerts itself within  
“ us, spreading as it were a meridian light through the Soul,  
“ we are then in our right senses, without any divine influx:  
“ but when the mind goes down, then a divine ecstasy and  
“ prophetic madness fall upon us: for when the divine light  
“ shines, the human sets: and when that sets, this again  
“ rises; and this is what usually happens to the prophetic

puerorum innocens ætas, quæ in extasi videt & audit & loquitur ea, quibus nos Dominus monere & instruere dignatur. Epist. ad Cler. ix. p. 22. Ed. Nic. Rigalt.

[1] Quum in illum Deus amentiam immisit, spiritalem vim, qua constat prophetia. De Anim. c. 21. it. 24.

[2] Τῶν μανιῶν—αἱ δὲ αἰρεῖσθαι καὶ εὐχῆς ἀξίαι, οἷαι τῶν ποιητῶν, καὶ τῶν χρησμολόγων. in voce Μανίαι.

[3] Plane senibus ita somnia aptantur, ut Juvenibus Visiones. Vehemens nimirum illa humorum agitatio non erat nisi in ætatis vigore toleranda. &c. Vid. Dissert. Cyprian. iv. § 40.



“ race : for the mind is driven out of us, when the divine spi-  
 “ rit comes in ; and when this again quits us, the other re-  
 “ turns : for it is not fit, that mortal should cohabit  
 “ with immortal [1].”

From these testimonies we may collect, that the Prophecy of the Primitive Church by *vision* or *ecstasy*, was of the same kind, as to it's outward appearance, with *that divination by fury*, as it was called among the Gentiles, which was practised by the *Delphic Pythia*, and *Cumæan Sibyl*, when agitated by the pretended power and instinct of the God [2]. Of which *Cicero* says, in way of raillery ; “ what authority  
 “ can that madness have, which you call divine ; that a wise  
 “ man should not be able to foresee, what a madman can ;  
 “ and that he, who has lost all human senses, should present-  
 “ ly acquire divine ones [3].”

*Montanus* the Heretic, and his female Associates, seem to have been the Authors of these prophetic trances, towards the

[1] “Ἡλιον δὲ διὰ συμβόλης τὸν ἡμέτερον νῦν καλεῖ.——ὅτε μὲν γὰρ φῶς ἐπι-  
 λάμψει τὸ θεῖον, δύεται τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, ὅτε δ' ἐκεῖνο δύει, τῷτ' ἀνίχεται καὶ ἀνατέλλει.  
 τῷ δὲ προφητικῷ γένει φιλεῖ τῷτο συμβαίνειν.——Θέμις γὰρ ἐκ ἑστῆς, θνητὸν  
 ἀθανάτῳ συνοικῆσαι. &c. Philo. Quis. Divinor. Hær. Oper. Tom. 1. p.  
 511. Edit. Lond. 1742.

[2] Inest igitur inanymis præfagitio — ea si exarsit acrius, furor appellatur, quum a corpore animus abstractus divino instinctu concitatur. Cic. de Div. 1. 31.

—————ea fræna furenti

Concutit, & stimulos sub pectore vertit Apollo.

Ut primum cessit furor, & rabida ora quierunt. Virg. Æn. 6. 102.

[3] Quid vero auctoritatis habet furor iste, quem divinum vocatis, ut quæ sapiens non videat, ea videat insanus ; & is, qui humanos sensus amiserit, divinos adsecutus sit ? De Div. 2. 54.

end



end of the second century; and acquired great credit by their *visions and ecstasies*, in which they acted their part so well, by feigned distortions and convulsive agitations of the body, as to appear to be out of their senses; and in those fits, uttered many wild prophecies and prædictions, which they imposed upon the people for divine revelations; and by affecting at the same time a peculiar sanctity and severity of discipline, gathered a great number of disciples [1], who first raised and propagated that spirit of enthusiasm in the Church, which subsisted in it for near a century, under the title of *vision and prophecy*, and then gradually sunk into utter contempt.

*Tertullian*, a writer of this enthusiastic turn, severe in his manners, and stiff in his opinions, wrote with great vehemence against Plays and Shews: in which, as we have seen above, he made great use of visions, towards enforcing his argument. He wrote another book to prove, *that it was a Sin, for a Soldier, to wear a garland or crown on any occasion, and that a Christian should rather suffer martyrdom than submit to it* [2]: and in a third book, he affirms it to be rank idolatry, *to deck their doors with garlands or flowers, on Festival days, according to the custom of the Heathens*: “ and “ calls the name of God to witness, that he knew a person, who had been grievously chastised in a vision, because “ his servants, even without his knowledge and in his absence,

[1] Vid. Cave Hist. litt. Vol. I. p. 74. it. Jo. Cleric. Hist. Eccles. ad Ann. CLVII.

[2] Vid. lib. de Corona.



“ had crowned the door with flowers, on some occasion of  
 “ public joy [1].” He wrote a treatise likewise, to prove the  
 soul of man to be *corporeal and of human shape*: and for the  
 truth of his opinion, appeals to his ecstatic maid above-  
 mentioned, of whom he tells this story: that “ as he hap-  
 “ pened to be discoursing on the nature of the soul, she fell  
 “ into one of her trances: and as soon as the service was  
 “ over, and the people dismissed, she came, as usual, to re-  
 “ late to him, what she had seen; which was always care-  
 “ fully taken down in writing, in order to be examined:  
 “ when she declared, that there was shewn to her among  
 “ other things, an human soul in bodily form; yet so, as  
 “ to appear to be a spirit: not of a void and empty qua-  
 “ lity, but what might even be handled, tender and lucid, of  
 “ an airy color, and in all points of human shape [2].”  
 Which wild dream of a frantic, or fiction rather of a silly  
 woman, this Father applies, as the testimony of God himself,  
 to evince the certainty of his opinion. Lastly, in another  
 book, written to prove, that women ought always *to wear*  
*a veil*, he declares, *that God, in a vision to a certain sister,*

[1] Ex auctoritate quoque Dei contestor——scio fratrem per visionem eadem nocte castigatum graviter, quod januam ejus subito annuntiatis gaudiis publicis servi coronassent. &c. De Idolat. 15.

[2] Forte nescio quid de anima differebamus, cum ea soror in Spiritu esset. Post transacta solennia, dimissa plebe——inter cetera, inquit, ostensa est mihi anima corporaliter, &c. Hoc visio, & Deus testis, & Apostolus Charisma- tum in Ecclesia futurorum Sponsor.——De Anima. c. 9.



*had prescribed to her, by a special revelation, the exact length and measure of the veil [1].*

Now it is easy to imagine, how *Tertullian* might be imposed upon by the craft of these extatic visionaries; and by the warmth of his temper and force of his prejudices, be drawn to espouse any delusion, that flattered his particular zeal and favorite opinions. But it is difficult to account for the same conduct in his scholar *Cyprian*; a man of a more acute head, and sober mind; but fond of power and Episcopal Authority; whose character would tempt us to suspect, that he was the inventor, rather than the believer of such idle stories; and the director, rather than the dupe of senseless visionaries. Yet in all questionable points of doctrine or discipline, which he had a mind to introduce into the Christian worship, we find him constantly appealing to the testimony of *heavenly visions and divine revelations*. *It is certain, says Mr. Dodwell, that all things of great moment, which related to the public state of the Church, were foretold to him in visions [2].* For instance; in a letter to *Cæcilius*, he declares, that he had received a divine admonition, *to mix water with wine in the Sacrament*

[1] Nobis Dominus etiam revelationibus, velaminis spatia metatus est. Nam cuidam Sorori nostræ Angelus in Somnis. &c. De Virgin. Veland. 17.

[2] Adeo familiares *Cypriano* erant hujusmodi visiones, ut disciplinæ etiam Ecclesiasticæ exercitio illas acceperit, aliasque deinceps expectaret, &c. Dissert. Cyprian. iv. § 20.

Ita constat gravioris momenti omnia, quæ quidem publicum Ecclesiæ statum attinerent, esse istiusmodi visionibus prædicta. ibid. § 21.



of the Eucharist, in order to render it effectual [1]. In another to the Clergy, concerning certain Priests, who had restored some lapsed Christians too hastily to the Communion of the Church; he threatens them, to execute, *what he was ordered to do against them, in a vision, if they did not desist* [2]. He makes the same threat to one *Pupianus*, who had spoken ill of him, and withdrawn himself from his communion [3]: where his Editor *Rigaltius* makes this remark, “ that the argument of visions and divine revelations, which  
 “ *Cyprian* so frequently uses, is a weapon of great force  
 “ in the hands of so good a man, otherwise a vain and  
 “ contemptible one; since crafty Sophists might easily in-  
 “ vent such visions, in favor of any cause, to delude the  
 “ simple and unwary [4].

“ In a letter likewise to the Clergy and the people, *Cyprian* tells them, “ how he had been admonished and directed by  
 “ God, to ordain one *Numidicus* a Priest: who by his persua-

[1] Nec nos putes, frater carissime, nostra & humana conscribere, aut ultronea voluntate hoc nobis audacter assumere.—Sed quando aliquid Deo aspirante & mandante præcipitur, necesse est Domino servus fidelis obtemperet—admonitos autem nos scias, ut calix, qui in commemoratione ejus offertur, mixtus vino offeratur &c. Epist. LXIII.

[2] Quoniam si ultra in iisdem perseveraverint, utar ea admonitione, qua me Dominus uti jubet.—Ep. ix. p. 22.

[3] Epist. LXIX. p. 118. Memini enim quid mihi ostensum sit, &c.

[4] Hic etiam (*Cyprianus*) utitur ostensionibus & visionibus: telo, ad contem-  
 rendos adversarios, in manu præsertim *Cypriani*, viri optimi atque divini, valentissimo; alias vano ac futili. Nam & callidus Rhetor & Sophista vafer hujusmodi visa ad causam suam appositissima, poterit comminisci, & fallere incautos & simplices. Rigalt. Not. ibid.



“ five exhortations had sent a large number of Martyrs before him to the other world, either stoned or burnt to death ; and beheld even with joy, the wife of his bosom burnt together with the rest ; being himself also left for dead, half burnt, and buried in stones, till he was found scarce alive, and carried off by the piety of his daughter, and so restored to the world against his will. But the Lord had now signified the cause of it ; that he might add him to the Priesthood of his Church [1].” In another letter he recommends to them one *Celerinus*, whom he had ordained a lecturer : *whose modesty*, he says, *had been overruled and compelled by a divine vision, to accept that office* [2]. Where *Rigaltius* once more reflects, *on the great diligence of Cyprian, in making such use of visions* [3]. But Cyprian himself suggests the reason of it, in the Epistle immediately preceding, addressed likewise to the Clergy and the people, concerning one *Aurelius*, whom he had ordained a lecturer, by a *divine admonition*, without calling them together and consulting with them in common, concerning the character,

[1] Nam admonitos nos & instructos sciatis dignatione divina, ut *Numidicus* Presbyter ascribatur——qui hortatu suo copiosum Martyrum numerum, lapidibus & flammis necatum ante se misit: quique uxorem adhærentem lateri suo, concrematam simul cum ceteris——lætus aspexit. Ipse semiuftulatus & lapidibus obrutus, & pro mortuo derelictus,——remansit invitus, sed remanendi, ut videmus, hæc fuit causa, ut eum Clero nostro Dominus adjungeret. Ep. 35.

[2] Referimus ad vos *Celerinum*.—Clero nostro non humana suffragatione sed divina dignatione conjunctum, &c. Ep. 34.

[3] Notanda hic etiam est industria *Cypriani*, visionum efficacia tam suaviter utentis. Not. b. *ibid.*



and merit of the Candidate, as it was the custom of those days in all *Clerical ordinations*; for which he excuses himself by saying, that there was no occasion, in the present case, *to wait for human testimonies, when the divine suffrage had already been signified* [1]. This then seems to be the meaning of *Cyprian's diligence in the use of visions*, that whenever he thought fit to exert his Episcopal authority, *without the previous consent of his Clergy and people*, he might obviate their murmurs by alledging a divine command for it.

But the most memorable effect of any of his visions was, his flight and retreat, when he withdrew himself from his Church, in the time of persecution. A step which gave great scandal, and seems to have been considered by the Clergy of *Rome*, in a public letter written upon the subject of it, to the Clergy of *Carthage*, as a desertion of his post, and pastoral duty [2]. So that it is no wonder to find *Cyprian* himself, as well as his Apologist *Pontius*, the writer of his Life, so solicitous to excuse it. “ There is  
 “ no doubt, says *Rigaltius*, but that the severity of his ma-  
 “ ster *Tertullian*, who wrote a book against all flight in  
 “ time of persecution, raised such scruples and shame in the  
 “ mind of *Cyprian*, as made him labor hard to wipe off that  
 “ disgrace; as the pains and perplexity of his Advocate

[1] In Ordinationibus Clericis, Fratres carissimi, solemus vos ante consulere, & mores ac merita singulorum communi consilio ponderare, sed expectanda non sunt testimonia humana, cum præcedunt divina suffragia, &c. Ep. 33.

[2] Vid. *Cyprian. Epist. 2.*



“ *Pontius* likewise shew [1].” They both of them therefore affirm, “ that he was commanded to retire, *by a special revelation from heaven*: and that his flight was not the effect of any other fear, but that of offending God: and that his mind, wholly devoted and subservient to the admonitions of God, was persuaded, that, if he had not obeyed the Lord, when he commanded him to retreat, he should sin even by suffering martyrdom [2]” Yet this plea was nothing else without doubt, but a mere fiction, contrived for the purpose of quieting the scandal, that was raised by his flight, and is in effect confuted by himself in another letter to the Clergy, in which he declares, “ that it was the advice and authority of one *Tertullus*, which prevailed with him to withdraw himself from a place, where his life was so much sought for: wherefore he desires them, to perform all the functions of his office for him during his retreat,

[1] *Secessus iste Cypriani fugæ probro minime caruit,—nec dubito quin ipsa tanti Magistri severitas discipuli mentem adeo suffuderit, vel aliquo saltem scrupulo sic pupugerit, ut fugæ suspicionem Cyprianus abs se amoliri magno studio contenderet. Hoc & Pontii familiaris sui satis intricata sedulitas ostendit, ipsiusque Cypriani Epistolæ sequentes declarant. Et si verum amamus, haud aliud magis ista Romani Cleri tam argumentosa quam incondita commonitio proscribit. Rigalt. ibid. Not. b.*

[2] *Et audietis omnia quando ad vos reducem me Dominus fecerit, qui, ut secederem, jussit. Epist. ix. p. 22.*

Fuit vero formido illa, sed justa; formido, quæ Dominum timeret offendere. Formido, quæ præceptis Dei mallet obsequi, quam sic coronari. Dicata enim in omnibus Deo mens, & fides divinis admonitionibus mancipata, credidit se, nisi Domino latebram tunc jubenti paruisset, etiam ipsa passione peccare. Cyprian. Vit. per Pontium. p. 13.



“ since their persons were not exposed to so much envy and  
 “ danger as his would be [1].”

*Dionysius*, Bishop of *Alexandria*, who lived in the same age, has left the same story likewise concerning himself, and swears to the truth of it: that in the time of a persecution, he was commanded by God in a vision, to retire from *Alexandria*, and was wonderfully preserved and guarded by him in his retreat [2]. *And shall we not believe a most holy Bishop*, says *Mr. Dodwell*, *even upon his oath* [3]? The same *Dionysius* affirms likewise, that he had another vision, upon the subject of *reading Heretical books*, about which, he had some scruples, till a voice from heaven expressly enjoined him, to read them all without reserve, because he was able to examine and confute them [4]. This reminds me of a vision also which *St. Jerom* declares to have been given to himself,

[1] A *Tertullo*, fratre nostro carissimo, ratio reddetur: qui pro cetera sua cura, quam impendens divinis operibus impertit, etiam hujus consilii auctor fuit, ut cautus & moderatus existerem, nec me in conspectum publicum, & maxime ejus loci, ubi toties flagitatus & quaesitus fuisset, temere committerem. Fretus ergo & dilectione & religione vestra, his litteris & hortor & mando, ut vos quorum minime illic invidiosa & non adeo periculosa praesentia est, vice mea fungamini, &c. Ep. 5. p. 13.

[2] Ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶ Θεοῦ λαλῶ, καὶ αὐτὸς οἶδεν ὅτι ἐψεύδομαι. ὑδερίαν ἐπ’ ἐμαυτῷ βαλλόμενος, ὑδ’ ἀθεεὶ πεποίημαι τὴν φυγὴν. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 6. c. 40.

[3] Quid hic faciemus? Viro Sanctissimo ne jurato quidem credemus? Dif- fert. Cyprian. iv. § 17.

[4] Ὁραμα Θεόπεμπτον ἐπέρρωσέ με. καὶ λόγος πρὸς με γενόμενος, ποσέταξε διαρρήδην λέγων, πᾶσιν ἐνλύγχανε οἷς ἂν εἰς χεῖρας λάβοις. διευθύνειν γὰρ ἕκαστα καὶ δοκιμάζειν ἱκανὸς εἶ. Euseb. Hist. 7. 7.

about



about a century after; in which he was dragged to the Tribunal of Christ, and terribly threatened, and even scourged for the grievous sin of reading secular and profane writers, Cicero, Virgil, and Horace; whom for that reason he resolved never to take into his hands any more: upon which Ruffinus rallies him with great spirit and smartness, for inventing and publishing so silly a lie [1]. And it must needs be thought strange, that God should injoin contrarieties to his Saints and Servants; should command one *Father*, to read *Heretical books*, because he was able to confute them, yet forbid it afterwards to another, who was full as able, to confute them, as his Predecessor. But if *Jerom's* vision deserved to be treated by his contemporaries as a fiction, I see no reason, either from the nature of the thing, or the use, which is made of it, or the characters of the persons concerned, why *the visions of Cyprian and Dionysius*, should not merit the same treatment.

But how credible soever these visions might appear to the generality of Christians in those days, yet there were many at the same time, as *Cyprian* himself confesses, who contemned and made a jest of them all, as mere illusions and impertinent fancies: but they were a sort of men, he says, *who*

[1] Ostendam apud ipsum (*Hieronymum*) tam licita haberi perjuria, ut in scriptis quoque suis deprehendi ea non erubescat. — Et cetera cum dixisset ejusmodi, quibus alienam esse a Christiano assereret librorum sæcularium lectionem, inserit etiam revelationem quandam ad se divinitus factum. &c. *Rufin. Adv. Hieron.* Vid. *Oper. Hieron.* Tom. 4. par. 2. p. 414. Edit. *Benedict.*



would sooner believe any thing against a Priest, than believe a Priest [1].

In one of the Dialogues, commonly ascribed to *Lucian*, the Christians seem to be ridiculed, on the account of their fasting and watching whole nights in hymns and prayers, as if they could infuse by that means, what sort of dreams or visions they thought fit [2]. Now there is a passage so applicable to this remark, in the ancient narrative of the Martyrdom of St. *Ignatius*, as to make us almost imagine, that the author had alluded to it. The narrative was drawn up by persons, who had accompanied the Martyr from *Asia* to *Rome*, whose thoughts, for several months past, had been employed on nothing else but the subject of his Martyrdom, and it concludes thus. “ These things were done on the 13th of the Kalends of *January*; *Sura* and *Synecius* being the second time Consuls of *Rome*; of which we ourselves were eyewitnesses. And the night following, as we were watching with tears in the house, and praying to God with bended knees, that he would impart to us weak men, some assurance of what was done, [with regard to the Martyr;] it happened, that falling into a slumber, some of us, on a sudden, saw the blessed *Ignatius* standing before us and embracing us;

[1] Quanquam sciam somnia ridicula, & visiones ineptas quibusdam videri; sed utique illis, qui malunt contra sacerdotes credere, quam sacerdoti. Ep. 68. p. 118.

[2] Ἐλεγον γὰρ εἰλίης δέκα ἄσῃλοι διαμενῶμεν. καὶ ἐπὶ παννύχης ὑμνωδίας ἐπαγρυπνήσαντες, δνειρώτλομεν τὰ τοιαῦτα.—*Philopatris*. vers. fin.



“ others beheld the blessed Martyr praying for us ; others  
“ as it were dropping with sweat, as if just come from  
“ his great labor, and standing by the Lord : which when  
“ we saw, being filled with joy, and comparing the vi-  
“ sions of our dreams with each other, we glorified God the  
“ giver of all good, and being assured of the blessedness of  
“ the Saint, we have made known unto you, both the  
“ day and the time, that being assembled together, according  
“ to the time of his Martyrdom, we may communicate with  
“ the combatant and most valiant Martyr of Christ [1].

But to declare freely what I think : whatever ground there might be in those primitive ages, either to reject or to allow the authority of those visions, yet from all the accounts of them, that remain to us in these days, there seems to be the greatest reason to suspect, that they were all contrived, or authorized at least, by the leading men of the Church, for the sake of moderating and governing with more ease, the unruly spirit of the populace, in those times of danger and difficulty. For they are generally applied, to excuse the conduct of particular persons, in some instances of it liable to censure ; or to enforce some particular doctrine or discipline, warmly pressed by some, and not well relished by others ; or to confirm things not onely trifling and frivolous, but sometimes even superstitious and hurtfull to true religion.

[1] Vid. Coteler. Patr. Apostol. Vol. II. Martyr. S. Ignat. §. VII. p. 161.  
See also Archbishop *Wake's* Translation.



I have already observed, that it was the Heretic *Montanus*, who first gave a vogue to *prophetic visions and ecstasies*, in the primitive Church. But when his pretensions came afterwards to be suspected and decried, it is remarkable, that those, who undertook to expose and confute them, employed such arguments against his prophecy, as seemed to shake the credit of all prophecy. For whereas the *Montanists* delivered their prophecies always in *ecstasy*, or with loss of senses; it was then urged against them, “ that this was the proof of a Diabolical  
 “ spirit; that the true Prophets never had such fits; never lost  
 “ their senses; but calmly and sedately received and un-  
 “ derstood whatever was revealed to them.” And *Epiphanius* makes this the very criterion or distinguishing character between a true and false prophet; *that the true had no ecstasies, constantly retained his senses, and with firmness of mind apprehended and uttered the divine oracles* [1]. St. *Jerom* also declares, *that the true Prophets never spake in ecstasy, or madness of heart, like Montanus and his mad women, Prisca and Maximilla, but understood what they delivered, and could speak or hold their tongues, whenever they pleased, which those, who spake in ecstasy, could not do* [2]. *Eusebius* also mentions a book of one Mil-

[1] “Οτε γὰρ ἦν χρεία, ἐν προφήταις, ἐν ἀληθινῷ πνεύματι, καὶ ἐρρωμένη δια-  
 νοίᾳ καὶ παρακολούσει νῷ, οἱ αὐτῶ ἀγιοὶ τὰ πάντα προεφητεύσαν. &c. Adv.  
 Hæres. l. 2. T. 1. § III. p. 404.

[2] Non enim loquitur (Propheta) in ἐκστάσι extasi, ut *Montanus* & *Prisca Maximillaque* delirant, sed quod prophetat, liber est visionis intelligentis univer-  
 sa quæ loquitur. Hier. Op. Vol. III. p. 1559. Prolog. in Naum Proph.

Qui autem in extasi, id est, invitus loquitur, nec tacere nec loqui in sua po-  
 testate habet. ibid. Prol. in Abacuc. p. 1591.



*tiades*, written against *Montanus*, the purpose of which was, to prove, *that a Prophet ought not to speak in ecstasy* [1]. Yet from the testimonies collected above, we have seen, that before the *Montanists* had brought those *ecstasies* into disgrace, the prophecy of the orthodox, as well as that of the Heretics, was declared to have been exerted in *ecstasy*. And it appears to have been the current opinion in those earlier days, that the Prophets also of the old Testament received and uttered their revelations in *ecstasy*.

*Athenagoras* expressly affirms it, and says, “ that while  
“ they were under the divine impulse, they were transported  
“ out of their senses, and delivered in ecstasy what was inspir-  
“ ed, being mere organs of the Holy Spirit, just as a pipe  
“ or flute is of him, who blows into it [2].” *Justin Mar-*  
*tyr* speaks of them in the same strain, “ that the spirit  
“ of God descending from above, made use of them, as of  
“ an instrument, just as the quill strikes the harp or lyre,  
“ to revele to us the knowledge of divine and heavenly  
“ things [3].” *Tertullian* also declares, “ that he, who has  
“ the spirit within him, must necessarily be deprived of

[1] Ἐν ᾧ ἀποδείκνυσι περὶ τῆς μὴ δεῖν προφήτην ἐν ἐκστάσει λαλεῖν. Euseb. Hist. l. 5. c. 17.

[2] Οἱ καὶ ἐκασιν τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς, λογισμῶν, κινήσαντες αὐτὰς τῆς θεῆς πνεύματος, ἃ ἐνηργῶντο ἐξεφώνησαν. ὥσπερ καὶ αὐλήτης αὐλὸν ἐμπνεῦσαι. Legat. pr. Christian. p. 9. Edit. ad calcem Oper. Just. Mart.

[3] Ἰν’ αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον ἐξ ἑρᾶν καλὸν πλῆκτρον, ὥσπερ ὄργανον κιθάρας τινὸς ἢ λύρας, τοῖς δικαίοις ἀνδράσι χρώμενον, τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἡμῖν καὶ ἑρᾶν ἀποκαλύψῃ γινώσκιν. Cohort. ad gent. p. 9. B.



“ his senses, especially whenever he beholds the glory of  
 “ God, or when God speaks by him, as being then over-  
 “ shadowed by the divine power [1].”

Again, *Montanus's* Associate *Maximilla*, gave out, *that the gift of prophecy was to cease with her*, and no other Prophet to arise after her. In answer to which, the Orthodox asserted, *that the true spirit of prophecy could never fail or cease in the Church, till the consummation of all things* [2]. In which as *Mr. Dodwell* owns, “ the Ancients argued rashly, and were  
 “ mistaken in their notion of the perpetuity of prophecy:  
 “ since *Eusebius*, who made it his business to explore and de-  
 “ duce the succession of those prophetic gifts, intimates, that  
 “ they were ceased and vanished in his days [3]:” that is, about the middle of the fourth century.

Since we are now considering the miracles of the *Cyprianic* age, I cannot forbear taking notice of two or three of those wonderfull stories, which *Cyprian* himself attests, in that

[1] In spiritu enim homo constitutus, præsertim quum gloriam Dei conspicit, vel per ipsum Deus loquitur, necesse est, excidat sensu. — Adv. Marcion. 1. 4. P. 537.

[2] Φάσκει γὰρ ἡ παρ' αὐτοῖς λεγομένη Μαξιμίλλα ἡ προφῆτις — μετ' ἐμὲ προφῆτις ἔτι ἔσται, ἀλλὰ συνήλεια. &c. Epiphan. Hæres 48. §. 2. Δεῖν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ προφήτικον χάρισμα ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Εκκλησίᾳ μέχρι τῆς τελείας παρυσίας, ὁ Απόστολος ἀξιοῖ. Euseb. Hist. 5. 17.

[3] Scio equidem lubensque concedo, in tota hac *de prophetiarum perpetuitate*, hallucinatos esse veteres. Dissert. Cypr. iv. § 13.

*Eusebius*, qui hoc in sua historia notatu dignum duxerit, quousque *donorum prophetorum* successio permanavit, id sane innuit, suo jam tempore illam defecisse. ibid. § 22.

magnificent



*magnificent treatise*, as it was called, concerning *the lapsed* Christians, who, in the time of persecution, had been induced, by the terrors of present death or tortures, to deny Christ, or offer incense to an Idol. “ There was a man, says he, who  
“ went up voluntarily to the Capitol, to deny the Lord ;  
“ and when he had denied him, was presently struck dumb.  
“ —A woman also, who, after her lapse, had the impu-  
“ dence to go to the baths, was there seized by an un-  
“ clean spirit, and thrown to the ground, and with her  
“ teeth tore that tongue, with which she had been either  
“ talking, or feeding impiously ; and so became her own  
“ executioner ; for she died not long after in great anguish and  
“ torments of her bowels.” He introduces the next story more solemnly, by declaring, that he himself was present and an eye-witness of it. “ Certain Parents, says he, too solicitous  
“ for their own safety, and flying from persecution, left  
“ an infant daughter to the care of a nurse ; who carried  
“ it presently to the Magistrates. These, being then assem-  
“ bled with the people before an Idol, and seeing the child  
“ not yet old enough to eat flesh, gave it a piece of bread  
“ dipt in wine, being the remains of what had been offer-  
“ ed to the Idol. The mother, ignorant of the fact, with-  
“ in a short time after took her daughter home again : but the  
“ child was yet no more able to discover the crime com-  
“ mitted, than she was before, to understand or to hinder  
“ it. The mother brought her therefore to us at the sacra-  
“ ment, while we knew nothing of the matter. But the



“ child being now mingled with the Saints, and impatient  
 “ of the service and prayers, began to be seized, some-  
 “ times with fits of crying, sometimes with tortures of the  
 “ mind, and, as if it had been upon the rack, betrayed by  
 “ all the signs, which it's tender-age could give, a sense  
 “ of guilt and consciousness of the fact. The service be-  
 “ ing ended, when the Deacon began to give the Cup  
 “ to all present, and it came to the child's turn, the little  
 “ one, by divine instinct, turned away it's face, held it's  
 “ lips close shut, and refused the cup: the Deacon persisted,  
 “ and poured a little down it's throat, tho' by force: up-  
 “ on this, convulsions and vomitings ensued: the Eucha-  
 “ rist could not stay in a body and mouth so defiled: the  
 “ consecrated potion of the Lord's blood burst out of it's  
 “ polluted bowels: so great is the power, so great the ma-  
 “ jesty of the Lord: the secrets of darkness are detected by  
 “ it's light: nor could hidden crimes be concealed from the  
 “ Priest of God: for this happened to an infant, which  
 “ was not yet of age to speak, or tell the crimes, which  
 “ others had committed upon it. There was another wo-  
 “ man, says *Cyprian*, who, after she had taken the Sacra-  
 “ ment with us unobserved, was instantly seized, with pains  
 “ and torments, and fell down convulsed and trembling, as  
 “ if she had swallowed a sword or deadly poyson: and her  
 “ crime, which had escaped the notice of men, met with  
 “ it's punishment from God. Another, who had attempt-  
 “ ed with her polluted hands to open her chest,” (in which



the consecrated elements, according to the custom of that age, were kept for her use at home,) “ fire burst out of it in  
“ such a manner, that she durst not touch it. Another  
“ man, who had also been defiled, having had the assurance  
“ to take a part of the consecrated bread, among the rest,  
“ undiscovered, could neither eat nor handle it, but in-  
“ stead of it, found a coal of fire in his hands [1].”

Now what other notion can we reasonably entertain of these strange stories, but that they were partly forged, and partly aggravated and dressed up into this tragical form, from some accidental disorders, which the sense of a concealed guilt, and the dread of God’s judgements upon it, would naturally raise in anxious minds, on that awfull occasion of receiving the Sacrament? For it is certain, that they were of the greatest use, in these times of danger and trial, to support the discipline of the Church, which the *Lord guarded*, as Mr. *Dodwell* says, *by these terrors, as by the sword of a Cherubim* [2]. Since none of those, who had secretly lapsed, or been weak enough to deny the faith, and from a desire of concealing their shame, had evaded the penance of the Church, durst either come openly to the Sacrament, or take it even privately at home, or yet wholly abstain from it, when the divine judgements were so signally exerted upon all, who had ventured on any of those expedients, before they had made a

[1] Vid. Cyprian. de Lapsis. Edit. Nic. Rigalt. p. 175.

[2] Ita munivit Ecclesiæ suæ Dominus, quasi gladio quodam Cherubico, sanctam undequaque disciplinam. Diff. Iren. 2. § 54.



public satisfaction for their crime, and been absolved of it in form by the Pastors of the Church. And it was without doubt for this end, that all these stories, with many more of the same kind, were so pompously and rhetorically set forth by this eminent Bishop, in his celebrated treatise concerning the *lapsed* Christians.

§ 5. As to the gift of *expounding the Scriptures, or the mysteries of God*, by a divine inspiration, which is claimed likewise by the Primitive Fathers, there is not the least trace of it to be found in any age of the Church, from the days of the Apostles. For in the second and third Centuries, the very period, in which all the other miraculous gifts are supposed to have flourished in their greatest vigor, it is certain, as we have seen above, that a most senseless, extravagant, and enthusiastic method of expounding prevailed, which has ever since been utterly slighted and rejected: whereas in these later days, when all extraordinary gifts are confessedly ceased, a clear, solid, and rational way of interpreting generally obtains, as the warmest advocates of Antiquity are forced to allow. And whenever any particular Father happens to be censured for his ridiculous comments on Sacred Writ, his Apologists with one voice alledge, that such expositions are not to be charged to the man, *but to the age, in which he lived*, which could not relish or endure any better.



*Justin Martyr* however lays claim to this gift, as conferred upon him by the special grace of God [1], upon which *Mr. Tillemont* declares, “ that of all the extraordinary graces, which the “ Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Church in those times, “ there were few so considerable, as that of understanding the “ Scriptures, which was communicated by singular favor to “ *Justin* [2].” Yet from all the writings and monuments of the very earliest Fathers, which remain to us, it is manifest, beyond all contradiction, that there never was any such gift in the Church, after the times of the Apostles; and that *Justin* in particular, had no better claim to it, than any of the rest. And if those Fathers then, through a fervency of zeal, or an enthusiastic turn of mind, could mistake such fancifull expositions, for divine inspirations, I see no reason, why they might not as easily be deluded in every other instance of those pretended gifts, which flattered the same zeal and spirit, that so strongly possessed them.

It is a common case with men of great piety, zealously persuaded of the truth and high importance of any religious doctrine, to think it reasonable, that God should interpose himself miraculously in favor of it, when it happens to be opposed by any earthly power and in danger of being oppressed: and when they are thus prepared by their prejudices, to

[1] Ἀπεκάλυψεν ἐν ἡμῖν πάντα ὅσα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ νενοήκαμεν. *Just. Dial. Par. 2. p. 352. Edit. Thirlb. it. p. 258, 391.*

[2] *Memoirs. Tom. 2. p. 358. 380.*



expect a divine interposition, they listen to every pretension of that sort, which craft or wild enthusiasm can devise, without allowing their reason to examine it, or to suggest the suspicion of a fraud. There are many instances of this in History, and a remarkable one in our own; that of *the Holy Maid of Kent*, in the reign of *Henry the 8th*: who by the pretence of *visions and divine revelations*, communicated in *trances or ecstasy*, contrived by Popish Priests, to raise the sinking credit of their cause, drew in Bishop *Fisher*, with many other eminent persons, to take her for a *Prophetess*, divinely inspired, as *Tertullian* did his *ecstatic Maid*. Yet this modern Prelate was more learned and judicious, than any one perhaps of all the ancient Fathers, and by all accounts of him, as pious and religious too: since he lost his life, or, in the stile of the *Romish Church*, suffered martyrdom, for the sake of those very prejudices, which betrayed him into this folly. But the Lord *Cromwell*, expostulating with him on that subject, rightly told him, “ that the true reason, which induced him to give credit to the maid, was the matter of her prophecies; to which he was so addicted, that nothing could come amiss, which served to that end; and he appealed to his conscience, whether, if she had prophesied in favor of the King’s proceedings, he would have given such easy credit to her, and not have examined the matter farther [1].”

[1] See Bp. Burnet, Hist. Reform. Vol. I. p. 154.



§ 6. The *gift of tongues* also is claimed, as we have seen, among the rest, and affirmed to have been actually possessed by the primitive Christians: for if the testimony of *Irenæus* can be credited, many were indued with it in his days, and heard *to speak all kinds of languages in the Church*. And in truth, this gift, in the common estimation of human reason, has been thought so essentially necessary to the propagation of the Gospel, in those first ages, that the Advocates of the primitive miracles, trusting to that hypothesis, instead of searching into the fact, urge the necessity of its continuance after the days of the Apostles, as a proof of the continuance of all the rest. Yet how great soever the importance of it may seem to be, it is evident, as I have elsewhere shewn, from the origin, nature and exercise of it, as they are represented in the New Testament, that it was not permanent or lasting, either in the Church at large, or in those particular persons, who were principally favored with it, but was granted onely on certain special occasions, and then again withdrawn, even from the Apostles themselves; so that, in the ordinary course of their ministry, they appear to have been generally destitute of it.

*Irenæus* however declares it to have been indulged to many in his days. But it is very remarkable, that this Primitive Bishop, who ascribes it so liberally to others, appears to have been in great want of it himself, for the propagation of the Gospel in his own *Diocese*, among the *Celtæ*, or *Gauls*; where, as Dr. *Cave* interprets his words, *it was not*  
*the*



the least part of his trouble, that he was forced to learn the language of the country; a rude and barbarous dialect, before he could do any good upon them [1]. Nor is it less strange also, that from the time of *Irenæus*, there is not a single Father, in all the succeeding ages, who, upon his authority, has ventured to carry on the same pretension, or make the least claim to it; or to speak of it in any other manner, than as a gift peculiar to the first Christians, in the times of the Apostles. And I might risk the merit of my argument on this single point; that, after the Apostolic times, there is not in all history one instance, either well attested, or even so much as mentioned, of any particular person, who had ever exercised this gift, or pretended to exercise it, in any age or country whatsoever. Mr. *Dodwell* supposes it to have ceased, in the reign of *M. Aurelius*, about sixty years after the death of *St. John* [2]. But it is not credible, that a gift of such eminent use should intirely cease, while all the rest were subsisting in full vigor, and abounding every day more and more. If, according to the common hypothesis, we admit them all to be true, it is not possible, I say, to imagine any cause, why this in particular should be withdrawn, and the rest continued: but if, agreeably to my system, we consider them all, as fictitious, we then see an obvious and manifest reason for it. For all the

[1] See *Cave's Lives of Sts.* Vol. I. p. 169. § ix.

[2] *A Marci temporibus deficere cœperunt gratiæ illæ extraordinariæ—defecere eorundem dona linguarum.* *Diff. in Iren.* 2. § 44.



other extraordinary gifts, *of healing diseases, casting out Devils, visions, and ecstatic revelations*, afford great room to Impostors, to exert all their craft of surprizing and dazzling the senses of the simple, the credulous, and the superstitious of all ranks: whereas the *gift of tongues* cannot easily be counterfeited, or a pretension to it imposed on men of sense, or on any indeed, but those, who are utterly illiterate and strangers to all tongues but their own: and to acquire a number of languages by natural means, and to a degree, that might make them pass for a supernatural gift, was a work of so much difficulty and labor, as rendered it impracticable, to support a pretension of that kind, for a succession of many years. And this, in all probability, was the real cause of it's being dropped so early in those primitive ages: for after the mention of it by *Irenæus*, we find it no longer in any subsequent list of the miraculous gifts, nor the least hint of it's continuance in the Church, in any later writer, from that time, down to the present. If this then appears to have been the case of this particular gift; that a false claim to it was made by the early Fathers, and held up for a while, till it could no longer be supported; it is sufficient, one would think, of itself, to blast the general credit of all the rest, tho' no particular mark of fraud could have been fixed on each of them separately: but when there is not a single one among them all, which, either from it's nature, or end, or manner of exertion, or the character of it's witnesses, does not furnish just ground to suspect it as fictitious, it must



needs persuade every rational inquirer, that they were all derived from the same source of craft and imposture.

In short; if we trace the history of this gift from it's origin, we shall find, that, in the times of the Gospel, in which alone the miracles of the Church are allowed to be true by all Christians, it was the first gift, which was conferred upon the Apostles, in a public and illustrious manner, and reckoned ever after among the principal of those, which were imparted to the first converts. But in the succeeding ages, when miracles began to be of a suspected and dubious character, it is observable; that this gift is mentioned but once by a single writer, and then vanished of a sudden, without the least notice, or hint given by any of the ancients, either of the manner, or time, or cause of it's vanishing. Lastly, in the later ages, when the miracles of the Church were not onely suspected, but found to be false by our Reformers, and considered as such ever since by all Protestants, this gift has never once been heard of, or pretended to by the Romanists themselves, tho' they challenge at the same time all the other gifts of the Apostolic days. From all which, I think, we may reasonably infer, that *the gift of tongues*, may be considered as a proper test and criterion, for determining the miraculous pretensions of all Churches, which derive their descent from the Apostles: and consequently, if, in the list of their extraordinary gifts, they cannot shew us this, we may fairly conclude, that they have none else to shew, which are real and genuin.



I have now run through all the various kinds of the miraculous gifts, which are pretended to have subsisted in the Church, during the second and third centuries; and have opened the genuine state of them, as far as it is discoverable to us at this distance, from the most authentic monuments and testimonies of the principal Fathers of those centuries. Ages, which are always styled the purest, and in which these very Fathers bore the first character; not only on the account of their piety and integrity, but of their abilities also and learning. If any suspicions then can be entertained against such witnesses, they will be stronger still against all who succeeded them, especially after the Empire became Christian, when, according to the hypothesis of the very Admirers of these primitive ages, a general corruption both of faith and morals began more openly to infect the Christian Church; which by that revolution, as St. *Jerom* says, *lost as much of her virtue, as it had gained of power and wealth* [1].

But in the case of these miracles, there is one circumstance, common to all the writers, who attest them, as well in the earlier, as the later ages; that tho' their assertions be strong, their instances are weak; and when, in proof of what they affirm, they descend to alledge any particular facts, they are usually so unlucky in the choice of them, that instead of strengthening, they weaken the credit of their general affirmation, and, from the absurdity of each miracle re-

[1] Et postquam ad Christianos Principes venerit, potentia quidem & divitiis major, sed virtutibus minor est. Oper. Tom. 2. par. 2. p. 91.



lated by them, furnish a fresh objection to their power of working any. This the reader can hardly fail to observe, from the examples already produced ; to which I shall add one or two more, of the most considerable, which are transmitted to us from the same ages, and which I had before omitted to recite.

One of the most authentic and celebrated pieces in all primitive antiquity, is *the circular letter of the Church of Smyrna*, containing a narrative of the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, their Bishop, and *of the many miracles*, as Mr. Dodwell says, *which made it illustrious* [1]. This letter, written about the middle of the second century, informs us, “ that when that Saint  
 “ was entering the lists, in which he was to be burnt, there  
 “ was so great a tumult, that no body could be heard.——  
 “ But there came a voice to him from heaven, saying, *be*  
 “ *strong*, Polycarp, *and acquit thyself like a man* : and tho’  
 “ no body saw, who it was that spake, yet many of the  
 “ brethren heard the voice [2]. —— As soon as he had finish-  
 “ ed his prayer, the executioner kindled the fire, and the  
 “ flame began to blaze to a great height. When behold,

[1] Inter præcipua sacræ antiquitatis monumenta, quæ ex primis Ecclesiæ temporibus, ad nostram ætatem pervenerunt, jure merito computatur illa egregia epistola, quam de beati Polycarpi martyrio Ecclesia Smyrnenfis conscripsit. Ruinart. Act. Martyr. p. 28.

Quanta autem miracula hoc Martyrium insignierint, testes habemus ipsos illos Polycarpi Smyrnæos. Dodw. Diff. Iren. II. § xxxii.

[2] Vid. Martyr. Polyc. c. 8, 9. Apud Coteler. Patres, Apost. T. 2. p. 198.



“ says the writer, a mighty wonder appeared to us, whose  
 “ lot it was to see it, and who were reserved by heaven,  
 “ to declare to others what we had seen. For the flame,  
 “ forming a kind of arch, like to the sail of a ship filled  
 “ with the wind, encompassed the body of the martyr, as  
 “ in a circle; who stood in the midst of it, not as flesh,  
 “ which is burnt, but bread, which is baked, or as gold and  
 “ silver glowing in a furnace: and so sweet a smell issued  
 “ from him all the while, as if it had been the smoak of  
 “ frankincense, or some rich spices. At length, when these  
 “ wicked men saw, that his body could not be consum-  
 “ ed by fire, they commanded the executioner to draw near,  
 “ and to thrust his sword into him; which being done  
 “ accordingly, there came out of his Body *a Dove*, and  
 “ so great a quantity of blood, as quite extinguished the fire:  
 “ so that the whole multitude were amazed, to see so great a  
 “ difference between the Unbelievers, and the Elect [1].”  
 Yet it appears from the sequel of the narrative, that there  
 was fire enough still left, to consume the body to ashes,  
 which was executed with great care, that the Christians might  
 not be able to preserve the least remains of it.

The greatest part of this Epistle is transcribed by *Euse-  
 bius*, who has omitted the mention of *the Dove*, which  
 flew out of his body; for which reason Mr. *Dodwell* and  
*Archbishop Wake* have thought fit also to omit it. Yet all  
 the oldest copies still extant, from which *Archbishop Usher*,

[1] Vid. *ibid.* c. 15, 16.



*Cotelerius* and *Ruinart*, published their several editions, retain this passage [1]: which *Eusebius* might probably drop for the same reason, for which Mr. *Dodwell* and Bishop *Wake* also, profess to have dropt it; viz. for the sake of rendring the narrative *the less suspected* [2]. To the end of this letter is annexed the following advertisement. “ This Epistle was

[1] Præ aliis latinis versionibus, id habet Usseriana, quod omnium omnino aliarum longe antiquissima sit, utpote quæ non multo post Eusebii tempora facta fuerit: quamque existimat Usserius ipsam eandem fuisse, quæ olim in Ecclesia Gallicana legebatur. *Ruinart*. ib. p. 28. Vid. it. *Euseb. Hist. Eccles.* l. 4. c. 15.

[2] Nec enim illa urgemus, quæ de Columba habet Codex Usserianus, quæ nulla utique comparent in Eusebio aut Ruffino. Nec enim supposititiis, suspectæve fidei monumentis immistis, verorum fidem censuimus derogandam. *Dodw. Diss. Iren.* II. § xxxii.

N. B. Archbishop *Wake* explaining his reasons for omitting the story of *the Dove*, says; “ Now tho’ there may seem to have been something of a foundation for such a miracle, in the raillery of *Lucian*, upon the death of *Peregrinus* the Philosopher, who burnt himself about the same time that *Polycarp* suffered, and from whose *Funeral Pile* he makes a *Vultur* to ascend, in opposition, it may be, to St. *Polycarp*’s *Pigeon*, (if indeed he designed, as a learned man has conjectured, under the story of that Philosopher, to ridicule the life and sufferings of *Polycarp*) yet I confess, I am so little a friend to *such kind of miracles*, that I thought it better with *Eusebius*, to omit that circumstance, than to mention it from Bp. *Usher*’s Manuscript, &c.” [Prelim. Discour. p. 57.] which Manuscript however, he afterwards declares, *to be so well attested, that we need not any farther assurance of the truth of it.* p. 59.

These deaths of the Primitive Martyrs seldom failed of being accompanied by miracles, which, as we find them related in the old Martyrologies, were generally copied from each other: concerning sweet smells issuing from their bodies, and their wonderfull resistance of all kinds of torture; and the miraculous cures of their wounds and bruises, so as to tire their tormentors by the difficulty of destroying them, which yet, after a vain profusion of miracles, was always effected at the last.

“ tran-



“ transcribed by *Caius*, from the copy of *Irenæus*, the disci-  
 “ ple of *Polycarp*; and I, *Socrates*, transcribed it at *Corinth*.  
 “ After which, I, *Pionius*, again wrote it out, from the co-  
 “ py above mentioned, having searched it out by the reve-  
 “ lation of *Polycarp*, who directed me to it, &c.”

*Eusebius* also relates a miracle, wrought by *Narcissus*, Bi-  
 shop of *Jerusalem*, about the end of the second, or the be-  
 ginning of the third century: “ that when the sacred oil was  
 “ almost spent, in the vigil of *Easter*, and the people were  
 “ in a great consternation about it, he ordered those, who  
 “ had the care of the lamps, to go and draw water from  
 “ a certain well in the neighbourhood, and to bring it away  
 “ to him: which being accordingly done, *Narcissus*, after he  
 “ had prayed over it, commanded them to pour it into the  
 “ lamps with a sincere faith in Christ; upon which, by a  
 “ miraculous and divine power, the nature of the water  
 “ was changed into the fatness of oil: of which oil, as  
 “ *Eusebius* says, several small quantities were preserved by  
 “ great numbers of the faithful, to his time, which was  
 “ about an hundred years after the date of the miracle [1].

The same Historian, giving an account of the horrible bar-  
 barities, which were exercised upon the Christians of *Palæstine*,  
 concludes one of his stories in the following manner; “ after  
 “ these things had been transacted many days successively, this  
 “ miracle appeared. There was a clear and bright sky, and

[1] Παρὰ δὲ πλείοις τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐπὶ μήκιστον ἐξ ἐκείνης καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς βραχύ τι  
 δεῖγμα τῆς τότε θαύμαλ' & φυλαχθῆναι. Hist. Eccl. 6. 9.



“ a remarkable serenity of the air: when on a sudden, the  
 “ pillars in the portico’s of the City, poured out drops of  
 “ tears; and when there was not the least moisture in the air,  
 “ the streets and public places were all wet, no body knew  
 “ how, as if water had been thrown upon them: so that  
 “ it became a common talk, that the earth wept for the  
 “ impiety, which was committed; and to reprove the relent-  
 “ less and savage nature of men, stones, and inanimate bo-  
 “ dies shed tears for what had happened [1].” A description  
 of this kind, might easily be excused in an Orator or a  
 Poet, but when an Historian, after he has raised our attention,  
 and prepared us to expect something great and miraculous,  
 tells us onely, *of stones shedding tears for the impieties of*  
*men*, he debases the gravity of History, and makes mira-  
 cles themselves contemptible.

Mr. *Dodwell*, as I have before said, has, with great dili-  
 gence, deduced the History of the primitive miracles, down  
 to these very times of *Eusebius*; which he then shuts up with  
 the establishment of Christianity by human laws, declaring,  
 “ that many things concurred to recommend the credit of  
 “ the preceding ages, which have no place in those, that fol-  
 “ lowed [2]:” and speaking of the Life of *Gregory*, called  
 the *wonder-worker*, written by *Gregory of Nyssa*, a Bishop of

[1] ΕΦ’ οἷς πλείσταις ἡμέραις ἐπιτελεσμένοις, τοιούτου τι παράδοξου συμβαίνει.  
 Ibid. c. ix. p. 425.

[2] Multa enim faciunt ad primorum Seculorum commendandam fidem,  
 quæ locum in sequentium seculorum testimoniis prorsus nullum habent. Dissert.  
 Iren. 2. § 62.



the greatest piety and gravity, he says, “ in this Life  
“ there are many things, which breath the air of imposture  
“ and the genius of the fourth century, so that I dare not  
“ mix them with what is more genuin, for fear of hurting  
“ the credit of all [1].” For this reason therefore, it was  
my first intention, to confine my inquiries also to the same pe-  
riod ; but having since perceived, that several of our learned  
Divines and principal advocates of the Christian faith have  
not scrupled, to assert the succession of true miracles, to the  
end even of the fifth century, I thought it necessary, to ex-  
tend my argument to the same length, lest I should seem to  
neglect any evidence, which could be offered to me, and espe-  
cially such, as is declared to be *convincing* and *decisive* by men  
of their character. But from every step, that we advance  
forward, we shall readily perceive, that Mr. *Dodwell*, who  
had as much piety and more learning, than any of them, has  
in this respect shewn more judgement too, by restraining the  
miraculous powers of the Church to the three first centu-  
ries.

In the fourth century, we find some of the principal Fa-  
thers delivering themselves on this subject so variously and in-  
consistently, as shews, that tho’ they were ashamed to deny,  
what they knew to be true, yet they were desirous to incul-  
cate, what they knew to be false. For on some occasions,  
when they are pressed, they plainly confess, that miracles

[1] Fateor ibi multa legi, quarti, in quo vixit Gregorius, seculi, Imposto-  
rumque genium referentia. &c. *ibid.* § 55.



were then ceased ; yet on others, they appeal to them again as common, and performed among them every day. For example, St. *Chrysostom* observes, “ that in the infancy of the Church, the extraordinary gifts of the spirit were bestowed even on the unworthy, because those early times stood in need of that help, for the more easy propagation of the Gospel ; but now, says he, they are not given even to the worthy, because the present strength of the Christian faith is no longer in want of them [1].” In another place, speaking of the miraculous powers of the Apostles, and of the force, which they had in converting the Gentile world, “ wherefore, adds he, because no miracles are wrought now, we are not to take it for a proof, that none were wrought then ; for then they were of use, but now they are not : for the first planters of the Gospel were simple and ignorant men, and had nothing to teach from themselves ; but what they received from God, that they delivered to the world : so we likewise of these times, bring nothing indeed of our own, but what we received from them, that we declare to all. — Nor do we yet persuade by the force of our reason, but evince the truth of our doctrines from the holy Scriptures, and the miracles then wrought in confirmation of them [2].” Again, speaking of the Jews, in our Saviour’s time, who *desired a sign*, he says,

[1] Νῦν δὲ ὅδὲ ἀξίοις δέδοται, ἡ γὰρ ἰσχὺς τῆς πίστεως ἐκείναι ταύτης δεῖται τῆς συμμαχίας. Op. T. 3. p. 65. Edit. Bened.

[2] Ibid. Op. T. x. p. 45, 46.

“ there



“ there are some also even now, who desire and ask, why  
 “ are not miracles performed still at this day? and why are  
 “ there no persons, who raise the dead and cure diseases?”  
 To which he replies, “ that it was owing to the want of  
 “ faith and virtue and piety in those times [1].” On another  
 occasion also he declares, “ that St. *Paul's* Handkerchiefs could  
 “ once do greater miracles, than all the Christians of his days  
 “ could do, with ten thousand prayers and tears [2].” Last-  
 ly, in *his books of consolation*, addressed to his friend *Stagirius*,  
 who was supposed to be possessed and horribly tormented  
 by an evil spirit, it is expressly signified, “ that neither the  
 “ tombs of the Martyrs, to which he had often applied for  
 “ relief, nor the repeated endeavours of the most holy and  
 “ celebrated Exorcists of those days, were able to drive the  
 “ Devil out of him [3].”

There

[1] Καὶ γὰρ καὶ νῦν εἰσιν οἱ ζητοῦντες καὶ λέγοντες, διὰ τί μὴ καὶ νῦν σημεῖα γίνονται.  
 &c. Ib. T. 8. p. 138. A. it. T. xi. p. 387, 388.

[2] Id. de Sacerdot. l. 4. Op. T. i. p. 411. A.

[3] Ad Stagir. lib. i. Oper. T. i. p. 179. A.

*N. B.* St. *Chrysostom* is thought to have written these books to *Stagirius*, about  
 A. D. 380. which Mr. *Whiston* recommends, as very curious, and well worth  
 the perusal of inquisitive men. [See *Dæmoniacs*, p. 60] I have run them slightly  
 over, and shall give the reader a short abstract, of what I chiefly collected from  
 them, since it relates to my present subject, and helps still to illustrate the true  
 character and principles of this fourth age.

*Stagirius* was the Son and Heir of a noble family in *Antioch*, trained up in  
 the Christian Religion; who, in contradiction to the will, and earnest remon-  
 strances of his Father, had taken a resolution to enter into the Monastic life:  
 for which purpose he seems to have withdrawn himself, in a secret manner,  
 tho' with the privity of his Mother, into a certain Monastery, where he lay con-



There are several other passages in this Father of the same strain; in which he allows the cessation of miracles, and  
speaks

celebrated from the pursuit and discovery of his Father. On his first entrance however, he did not easily relish the rough discipline of the cloyster; but presuming on the splendor of his birth, expected some exemption from the severer parts of it: till being inured to it by degrees, and confirmed by the example and admonitions of the Elder Monks, he became equal to the most perfect of them in the frequency of his fastings and watchings, and all the other arts of mortifying his body. But now the Devil resolved, if possible, to shake his constancy, and attacked him with all that train of evils, which his power and malice could inflict: by which he reduced him at last to such a state of melancholy and despair, as made life itself insupportable to him. In this condition he laid open his complaints to his friends, and particularly to St. *Chrysostom*, by whom they are severally enumerated and summed up in the following manner.

*First*, That in the former part of his life, while he lived like other men in the world, he never suffered any thing of this kind; but after he had crucified himself to the world, he presently fell under the sense of this disorder, which was sufficient to throw him into despair.

*2dly*, That many, who, from a luxurious life, had been afflicted in the same way, were yet relieved in a short time, and restored to perfect health, so as to marry, and become the Fathers of many children, and enjoy all the other delights of the world, without ever relapsing into the same misery: whereas he who had spent so much time in fastings and watchings and the other austerities of the Monkish discipline, could find no respite from his affliction.

*3dly*, That the holy man, who had shewn so much power in healing others in the same case, was not able to do him any service; neither he himself, nor any of the rest, who were with him, and more powerful even than he in these cures, but were all forced to go away with shame to themselves.



speaks of them even with contempt, “ as proper onely to  
“ rouse the dull and sluggish, but uselefs to men of philoso-  
“ phical

*4thly*, That he was so oppressed on this account with grief and despair, as to be frequently tempted to hang, or drown, or throw himself from some precipice.

*5thly*, That his companions, who entered with him into the same sort of life, continued to live at their ease and undisturbed, while he had no peace or rest, but was confined as it were to a prison, of all others the most wretched, since no fetters of iron were so grievous as the chain, with which he was bound.

*6thly*, That what chiefly disturbed and made him tremble even with fear, was, lest his Father should come to the knowledge of his case, and do some great mischief to those holy men, who first received him; and trusting to his power and wealth, and hurried on by his passion, should attempt all sorts of violence against them. That his mother indeed had hitherto been able to conceal the matter from him, and elude the effect of his inquiries; but if he should happen to detect her dissimulation, his resentment would be intolerable both to her and to the Monks.

*Lastly*, That the completion of his misery was, to have no confidence or hope in what was to come: and not to know, whether he should ever find any cure or ease, since his expectations had been so often frustrated, by relapsing still into the same evil.

Now from this detail of his complaints, as they were represented by himself, what else can we collect, but that this noble Youth, disgusted perhaps by some little domestic uneasiness, had been seduced by certain Monks, to bid adieu to the world and retire into a Convent. In which retreat, by reflecting at leisure on the rashness of his resolution, and the provocation, which he had given by it to an indulgent Parent, he seems to have been stung with remorse: while the austerities, which he now practised, and by which he hoped to calm his mind, and conciliate the favor of heaven, instead of appeasing, served onely to increase his anxiety, and reduced him by degrees to such a weakness and dejection both of body and mind, as brought on horrible Symptoms, and Epileptic fits,  
and



“ phical minds ; that they were frequently liable to sinister  
 “ suspicions, of being mere phantasms and illusions, and  
 “ that

and made him completely miserable. This naturally infused scruples and suspicions, which he himself gently intimates, that he was in a wrong way, and owed all his sufferings to his unhappy change of life ; and that a return therefore to the world, where he had never felt any such, would free him from them again, by affording him the comforts of matrimony, and children, and all the other sweets of social life.

That this was the real cause and source of his complaints, is evident from his own account of them. Let us see then what sort of comfort St. *Chrysostom* thought fit to administer to him in this sad state. This holy Father had himself also, when young, taken the same resolution of retiring from the world : in consequence of which, after he had spent several years in a Monastery, he betook himself to the mountains, where he lived, as an Hermit, in a solitary cave, for two years more : till perceiving at last, that the infirmity of his body, could no longer indure the severity of that discipline, he quitted his solitude, and chose to reside in *Antioch*. where he is supposed to have written this elaborate consolation to *Stagirius*. But tho’ he left the *Ascetic life* himself, when he found it hurtfull to his health, he never once suggests the same advice to his friend *Stagirius*, nor ever mentions the onely remedy, which could afford him any solid comfort ; viz. to quit the place and way of life, which had given birth to all his troubles ; and to reconcile himself to his Father, by returning to the world, and by the use of it’s innocent pleasures, to calm the disorders of his mind, and restore it to it’s former tranquillity.

This, I say, was the most rational and effectual comfort, which could be administered to him ; but instead of this, St. *Chrysostom* employs all his rhetoric to persuade him, that his sufferings were the sure marks of the divine favor, and had been of the greatest service to him : that he could not but remember, on his first entrance into the Monastery, and before the Devil began to vex him, how difficult he found it, to comply with the rules of the society ; how haughty and sluggish he was ; how hard to be roused from his bed : and how angry with those, who disturbed him : but from the time of this trial and struggle with the Devil, all that difficulty was at an end, and no man surpassed him in all those austerities and exercises of devotion, which constitute the perfection



perfection of the Christian life. He exhorts him therefore to persevere in his fastings and watchings, and all his other mortifications, as the onely means of baffling all these efforts and terrors, by which the Devil was laboring to drive him from that blessed course. That while he was immerfed in the pleasures of the world, or was yet a novice and raw in the Monastic life, God would not expose him to this trial, nor suffer the Devil to attack him; knowing, that he would then be an unequal match, and fall an easy prey to the Adversary: but now that he was become firm and perfect in all his exercises, God committed him to the Stadium, as an expert champion, and sure to come off with glory from the combat. That as to the trouble, which he suffered on the account of his Father, it was a weakness to afflict himself for what might or might not happen hereafter: that his Father perhaps would never come to the knowledge of his case; or if he did, would not be so much disturbed at it, as he imagined: that a man of his temper, fond of vain expences, and jovial company, puffed with pride and haughtiness, and enslaved to a Concubine, whom he kept in his house, would have but little concern for the distress of a Son. That he had shewn this already by experiments; for tho' he had once loved him with the utmost tenderness, and above all things in the world, yet all that love was extinguished, upon his entrance into the monastery; which his Father declared to be a baseness, unworthy of his Ancestors, and disgracefull to the splendor of his Family. It was probable therefore, that he would rejoice at his calamity, and think it a punishment of his disobedience to him, in betaking himself to a way of life, from which he had labored so earnestly to dissuade him. — In short the Summ of St. Chrysostom's consolation is this; *that the more* Stagirus *suffered in this conflict, the more assured he might be, that he was under the peculiar care of heaven; and that by finding no relief, either from the tombs of the Martyrs, which he had so often visited, or from his long abode with those holy Exorcists, who had never failed of success before, he had a clear demonstration of God's particular regard for him; who would never have hindered the effect of so much grace, nor exposed his own servants to so much shame, if he had not known it conducive to the greater good and probation of Stagirus.*

Such were the arts, by which the Saints of this fourth age were subjecting the world to the tyranny of superstition. Not content to make men Christians, they could not rest, till they had made them also Monks; till they had persuaded them, that the onely way of serving God, was, by rendering themselves useles to man; and of saving their souls, by doing mischief to their bodies.



“ that it was a proof of the greater generosity of that age,  
 “ to take God’s word without such pledges [1].”

From these testimonies, one would necessarily conclude, upon the authority of St. *Chrysostom*, that miracles were ceased in his days : yet in other parts of his works we find him in a different story, and haranguing on the mighty wonders, which were performed among them every day, *by the reliques of the Martyrs, in casting out Devils, curing all diseases, and drawing whole Cities and people to their Sepulchers* [2]. He displays also the miraculous cures, wrought by the use of *consecrated oil, and by the sign of the Cross* ; which last he calls *a defence against all evil, and a medicine*

dies. By this senseless cant, they made it their business, to gain the Mothers chiefly in the first place, and through them, their children : especially those of the rich and the great ; without the least regard to the will of their fathers, the distress of their families, the breach of filial duty, or the ruin which they wrought to the health, the fortunes, and the happiness of those, whom they insnared. We find several other instances of this kind in the works of this same *Chrysostom*, concerning the heirs of rich families, stolen away from their fathers by the artifices of Monks, which, as he himself informs us, raised such a clamor and indignation against the whole Monkish Order, among the generality of the better sort, as transported them almost to madness ; to see their children decoyed from them into a life, which they considered as utterly fordid and despicable. It was for the sake of appeasing these clamors, that he composed his three books, *against the Oppugners of the Monkish life* ; one of which is addressed *to the believing*, and another *to the unbelieving Fathers*, in order to convince them both, of the excellence of this divine *philosophy*, as it was called, and of the happiness accruing to their sons, from their choice and pursuit of it.

[1] Vid. Oper. T. 5. p. 455, 271. it. T. 7. 375. E. 376. B. &c.

[2] Ibid. T. 3. p. 338, 339.



*against all sickness, and affirms it to have been miraculously impressed, in his own time, on people's garments* [1].

St. *Austin* also, who lived at the same time, tho' in a different part of the world, takes notice of the same objection, made by the Sceptics, with which the Christians were commonly urged in this age. "They ask us, says he, *why are not those miracles performed now, which you declare to have been wrought formerly?* I could tell them, that they were then necessary, before the world believed, for this very purpose, that the world might believe; but he, who still requires prodigies, that he may become a believer, is himself a great prodigy, who does not believe now, when the world does believe [2]." One would not imagine, that these words, which seem to imply a cessation of miracles, were the preface to an elaborate narrative and solemn attestation of great numbers of them, said to have been wrought in these very times: which, if true, as they are here affirmed by St. *Austin* from his own knowledge, must have been more illustrious, both for the number and the excellence of them, than all, which were wrought by the Apostles themselves.

But before we descend to particulars, I cannot forbear observing, what this Father has delivered concerning the general state and credit of them among the Christians themselves, at

[1] Ibid. T. XI. p. 387. A. it. T. 5. p. 271. D.

[2] Cur, inquiunt, nunc illa miracula, quæ prædicatis facta esse, non fiunt? possem quidem dicere, necessaria prius fuisse, quam crederet mundus, ad hoc, ut crederet mundus. Quisquis adhuc prodigia, ut credat, inquit, magnum est ipse prodigium, qui, mundo credente, non credit. De Civ. Dei. l. 22. c. 8.



the very time, when they were wrought. He tells us then,  
 “ that tho’ miracles were frequently wrought, either by the  
 “ *name of Jesus, or by his Sacraments, or by the prayers or*  
 “ *the memorials of the Martyrs*; yet the fame of them was  
 “ not so illustrious, as of those of the Apostles: since  
 “ they were scarce ever known to the whole City or place,  
 “ where they happened to be performed; but for the most part,  
 “ to a very few onely; while all the rest were utterly ig-  
 “ norant of them; especially if the city was large: and if  
 “ ever they were told abroad to other people, yet they were  
 “ not recommended with such authority, as to be received  
 “ without difficulty and doubting, tho’ reported by true be-  
 “ lievers, to true believers [1].

That he might put an end therefore to this strange negli-  
 gence of the Christians, with regard to their own miracles,  
 he took care, as oft as he heard of any miracle, “ that the  
 “ parties concerned in it should be examined, and a verbal  
 “ proces, or authentic narrative be drawn of the fact, which  
 “ was afterwards publicly read to the people. Yet all this  
 “ caution, as he says, was not sufficient to make the mi-  
 “ racles known, or at all regarded: because those, who  
 “ were present at the recital of such narratives, heard them  
 “ but once, while the greater part were absent; and even

[1] Nam etiam nunc fiunt miracula, in ejus nomine, five per sacramenta ejus, five per orationes vel memorias Sanctorum ejus, sed non eadem claritate illustrantur——& quando alibi, aliisque narrantur, non tanta ea commendat auctoritas, ut sine difficultate, vel dubitatione credantur, quamvis Christianis fidelibus a fidelibus indicentur. Ibid. § 1.

“ those,



“ those, who heard them, retained nothing, a few days  
“ after, of what they had heard, and seldom or never took  
“ the pains, to tell it to any body else, whom they knew  
“ to be absent [1].” This account of the matter would  
be very surprizing, were it not explained to us by the miracles  
themselves; of which I have here added a few specimens,  
whence we shall easily collect the reason of that coldness  
and indifference, which the people of those days expressed to-  
wards them.

For instance, among many other stories of the same kind,  
he relates these, which follow: “ A pious old Cobler of  
“ *Hippo*, where he himself was Bishop, having lost his old  
“ coat, and wanting money to buy a new one, betook  
“ himself to *the twenty Martyrs*, whose chappel or memori-  
“ al was famous in that city; where he prayed to them  
“ very earnestly, that he might be enabled by them to get  
“ some cloaths. Some young Fellows, who overheard him,  
“ began to make sport with him, and pursued him with  
“ their scoffs, for begging money to buy a coat. But as  
“ the old man walked away, without minding them, he  
“ saw a large fish lie gasping on the shore, which he  
“ caught by the help of the young men, and sold to a  
“ Christian Cook, for three hundred pence; and laying out  
“ the money on wooll, set his wife to work, to provide

[1] Ut nec illi, qui adfuerunt, post aliquot dies, quod audierunt, mente re-  
tineant; & vix quisquam reperiatur illorum, qui ei, quem non adfuisse cogno-  
verit, indicet quod audivit. Ibid. § 21.



“ cloaths for him : but the Cook, cutting open the fish,  
 “ found a gold ring also in the belly of it ; which, out of  
 “ compassion to the poor man, and the terror also of religi-  
 “ on, he presently carried to the Cobler, saying, *see here is*  
 “ *the cloathing, which the twenty Martyrs have given you* [1].

“ There was one *Hesperius* likewise, as he tells us, a  
 “ man of Tribunician quality, whose country house near  
 “ *Hippo* was haunted by evil spirits, and his cattel also and  
 “ servants afflicted by them : upon which he sent a mes-  
 “ sage to the Priests at *Hippo*, when *Austin* happened to be  
 “ absent, that some of them would come over to him, and  
 “ drive the evil Spirits away by their prayers. One of them  
 “ accordingly went, and offered *the sacrifice of Christ's body*  
 “ upon the spot, praying at the same time, as fervently as  
 “ he was able, that this vexation might be removed ; upon  
 “ which by God's mercy it instantly ceased [2].

“ The same *Hesperius* had received from a friend some  
 “ *holy earth*, brought from *Jerusalem*, where Christ rose  
 “ from his grave on the third day ; which earth he hung  
 “ up in his bedchamber, to secure himself from the mischief  
 “ of those evil spirits. But since his house was now clear-  
 “ ed of them, he was considering, what he should do with  
 “ this earth, being unwilling, out of reverence to it, to keep  
 “ it any longer in his bedchamber. It happened, that St.

[1] Ad viginti Martyres, quorum Memoria apud nos est celeberrima, clara voce, ut vestiretur, oravit, &c. ib. § 9.

[2] Ib. § 6.



“ *Austin* and another Bishop, called *Maximinus*, were then  
“ in the neighbourhood ; so that *Hesperius* sent them an in-  
“ vitation to come to his house ; which they immediately  
“ accepted ; and after he had acquainted them with the whole  
“ affair, he desired, that *the sacred earth* might be deposited  
“ somewhere in the ground, and an Oratory built over it,  
“ where the Christians might assemble for the performance  
“ of divine service : the two Bishops had no objection, so  
“ that his project was presently executed. There was at  
“ the same place a country lad, afflicted with the palsy ;  
“ who having heard what was done, begged of his parents,  
“ that they would carry him without delay to that holy  
“ place : whither as soon as he was brought, he put up  
“ his prayers, and presently returned back on foot in per-  
“ fect health [ 1 ].”

There are many more tales of this sort, as contemptible, as any, in the Popish legends, and all attested by this celebrated Father, from his own knowledge : yet these are nothing to the extravagant things, which he goes on to relate, of *the reliques of the Martyr Stephen*. For as *reliques* were now become the most precious treasure of the Church, so these of *St. Stephen*, after they had lain buried and unknown for near four centuries, were reveled in a vision, to one *Lucianus* a Priest, by *Gamaliel*, the celebrated Dr. of the law, at whose feet *St. Paul* had been bred, and being found by his direction, were removed with great Solemnity and many

[1] Ibid.



miracles into *Jerusalem* [1]. The fame of these reliques was soon spread through the Christian world; and many little portions of them brought away by holy Pilgrims, to enrich the particular Churches of their own countries. For wherever any reliques were deposited, an Oratory or Chappel was always built over them, which was called *a Memorial* of that Martyr, whose reliques it contained. Several reliques therefore of *St. Stephen* having been brought by different people into *Afric*, as many Memorials of him were consequently erected in different places, of which three were peculiarly famous; one at *Hippo*, where *St. Austin* was Bishop; a second at *Calama*; and a third at *Uxalis*, two other Episcopal Cities; and many great and illustrious miracles were continually wrought in them all.

*St. Austin* has given us a particular relation of some of them, by which *the gout, the stone, and fistula's* were instantly cured; *the blind restored to sight; and five different persons raised even from death to life*. Two of whom were *carried dead to the reliques, and brought back alive*: two more restored to life, by the virtue of *their garments onely*, which had touched the reliques; and a fifth, *by the oil of the martyr's lamps*. After all which wonderfull stories, he adds the following apology, not for telling us so many of them, but

[1] The history of this revelation of *St. Stephen's reliques*, and of the miracles, which were wrought by them, is particularly delivered by several ancient writers, whose pieces are annexed, as an Appendix to the seventh Volume of *St. Austin*. Edit. Benedict. And the same revelation is referred to likewise by *St. Austin* himself in different parts of his works.



so few, out of the infinite number, which were publicly known and recorded.

“ What shall I do? says he : I am engaged by promise,  
“ to finish the present work, so that it is not possible for  
“ me in this place, to relate all the miracles, which I know;  
“ and our people without doubt, when they read these,  
“ will be grieved, that I have omitted so many, which  
“ they know to be true, as well as I. But I beg them  
“ to excuse me, and to consider what a tedious piece of  
“ work it would be, to do that, which the nature of my ar-  
“ gument does not oblige me to do here. For were I to re-  
“ late onely the miracles of cures, without mentioning the  
“ rest, which have been performed by this Martyr, the  
“ most glorious *Stephen*, in the colony of *Calama*, and  
“ in our own, it would fill a great number of volumes.  
“ Nor would it be possible to collect them all, but such of  
“ them onely, of which certificates have been made, and  
“ read to the people. For this I ordered to be done, when  
“ I saw the effects of the divine powers, like to those of  
“ the ancients, so frequently exerted also in our own times,  
“ which ought not to be lost from the notice of the multi-  
“ tude. It is not yet two years, since this Memorial was  
“ founded at *Hippo*, and tho’ I am certain, that no account  
“ was taken of many of the miracles, yet at the time,  
“ when I wrote this, the number of certificates publicly  
“ made, amounted to near seventy: but at *Calama*, where  
“ the Memorial is of longer standing, and certificates  
“ more



“ more frequently taken, they reach to a far greater  
 “ number.

“ At *Uxalis* also, we know many eminent miracles wrought  
 “ by the same Martyr ; whose Memorial was instituted there  
 “ by their Bishop *Evodius*, much earlier than with us. But  
 “ it is not the custom with them to take certificates, or it  
 “ was not rather, because now it is probably begun. For  
 “ when I was lately there, I exhorted *Petronia*, a celebrat-  
 “ ed Matron, who had been miraculously cured of a great  
 “ and lingering illness, in which the Physicians were not  
 “ able to help her, to get a certificate drawn of the case,  
 “ and read publicly to the people, to which, by the advice  
 “ also of the said Bishop of the place, she willingly con-  
 “ sented, and inserted in it another miracle, which notwith-  
 “ standing the haste, that I am in, to put an end to this  
 “ work, I cannot forbear relating, &c. [1].”

I have dwelt the longer on these miracles, than the im-  
 portance of them perhaps may be thought to require : but  
 they are so precisely described and authentically attested by  
 one of the most venerable Fathers in all antiquity, who  
 affirms them to have been wrought within his own know-  
 ledge, and under his own eyes, that they seem of all others  
 the best adapted, to evince the truth of what I have been  
 advancing, and to illustrate the real character of all the other  
 miracles of the primitive times, both before and after them.  
 Dr. *Chapman* however, speaking of the very same mira-

[1] De Civ. Dei. l. 22. c. 8. § 20, 21.



cles, roundly declares them all, *to be so strongly attested, both by the effects, and the relators of them, that to doubt their reality, were to doubt the evidence of sense* [1]. On these then, I am content to rest the fate of my whole argument; and if either Dr. *Chapman* or Dr. *Berriman* can maintain these miracles to be credible, shall no longer dispute the credibility of any, from the Apostolic times, down to our own. But, on the other hand, if miracles so strictly examined by a most Holy Bishop, confirmed by the certificates of eyewitnesses, and rehearsed publicly to the people, at the time when they are said to have been wrought cannot command our belief, these Doctors must needs confess, nay, they have already confessed, that the Christian Church can shew no other, except those of Christ and his Apostles, which can make any better pretensions to it.

For not to insist on the objections, which might reasonably be made to the probability of the facts themselves; to the incompetency of the instruments, by which, and of the ends, for which they are said to have been performed; to the credulity of a prejudiced, or the fidelity rather of an artfull and interested relator; it seems evident, from the neglect, with which they were treated by the Christians themselves; from the obscurity in which they lay; from the diligence of St. *Austin*, to search them out; to get certificates of them; and to publish them to the people; and from the insufficiency of all his pains, to make them still regarded or at all remem-

[1] *Miscell. Tracts* p. 174.



bered; that the people themselves saw or suspected the cheat, and were tired with the repeated frauds of this kind, which their Bishops were imposing upon them. For it is not possible to conceive any other reason of so surprizing a coldness, in a case of all others the most warming, but a general persuasion, grounded on experience, that these pretended miracles were nothing else but forgeries, contrived to enforce some favorite doctrine or rite, which the rulers of the Church were desirous to establish.

Yet these are not the stories, which chiefly shock Mr. *Dodwell*, and oblige him to reject the miracles of the fourth Century; but others still more extravagant, tho' attested likewise by persons of equal eminence and authority; by St. *Athanasius*, St. *Gregory of Nyssa*, St. *Jerom*, St. *Epiphanius*, &c. Of which therefore, it will be necessary to add a specimen or two, from each of those Fathers.

St. *Athanasius*, in the Preface to his life of St. *Antony* the Monk, declares, “ that he had inserted nothing in it, but “ what he either knew to be true, having often seen the “ saint himself, or what he had learnt from one, who had “ long ministered to him, and poured water upon his “ hands [1].” In this life then, after a great number of monstrous stories, concerning the personal conflicts, which this Saint continually sustained with all the several Devils,

[1] Διὰ τὸτο ἅπερ αὐτὸς τὲ γινώσκω (πολλάκις γὰρ αὐτὸν εἶώρακα) καὶ ἀμαθεῖν ἠδυνήθην παρὰ τῷ ἀκολυθῆσαντι αὐτῷ χρόνον ἐκ ὀλίγου——γράψαι τῇ ὑλαθείᾳ ὑμῶν ἐσπέδασα. Oper. T. 2. p. 451. Edit. Par.



and powers of Hell, who assaulted him in every shape, which could imprint terror; and exerted every art and even corporal punishments, to drive him from the Monastic life, which threatened the speedy ruin of their Kingdom, he tells us; “ that some body knocking one day at his Cell, *Antony* “ went to the door, where he saw a tall meager person, who “ being asked his name, answered, *that he was Satan.*— “ His business, it seems, was, to beg a truce of the Saint, “ and to expostulate with him, on account of the perpetual “ reproaches and curses, which the Monks so undeservedly “ bestowed upon him, when he was no longer in condition “ to give them any trouble: for since the desert was now “ filled with Monks, and the Christians spread into all “ places, he was disarmed of all power to do them any “ mischief: so that the Christians had nothing more to do, “ but to take care of themselves, and to forbear their need- “ less curses against him [1].” The rest of this piece is filled with many other miracles of the same stamp, too trifling to deserve any regard.

St. *Gregory of Nyssa*, in the life of his Namesake, called the wonder-worker, has this story, “ that the *Virgin Mary*, “ accompanied by St. *John* the Evangelist, appeared to *Gregory* “ in a vision, and explained to him the mystery of Godli- “ ness, in a short Creed or divine summary of faith, which “ he took down in writing, as they dictated it to him, and “ left the copy of it, a legacy to the Church of *Neocæsarea*,

[1] Ibid. p. 476.



“ of which he was Bishop: and if any one, says he, has  
 “ a mind to be satisfied of the truth of this, let him in-  
 “ quire of that Church, in which the very words, as they  
 “ were written by his blessed hand, are preserved to this  
 “ day: which, for the excellency of the divine grace, may  
 “ be compared with those tables of the law, made by God  
 “ and delivered to *Moses* [1].”

Dr. *Waterland* has given us a translation of this Creed, and Dr. *Berriman*, an abstract of it; which is *as express as possible*, they say, *for the doctrine of the Trinity, as it was taught afterwards by Athanasius*. They both however intimate, that the genuineness of the Creed had been called in question, tho’ without any sufficient cause [2]. Yet the learned *Cave*, who for zeal, and orthodoxy, and facility of believing, was scarce inferior to any, declares, *that notwithstanding the authority of Gregory Nyssen, who was apt to be too credulous, this short exposition of the Christian faith will hardly find credit with prudent and sensible men* [3]. But whatever may be alledged to persuade us, that this Creed was actually professed and taught by *Gregory*, in his Church of *Neocæsarea*, yet no man surely but Dr. *Berriman*, could have any scruple to own, that the story of the vision, and of it’s delivery to him from heaven, was a forgery, contrived to support the *Athanasian*

[1] Vid. Greg. Nyss. Vit. S. Greg. Thaumaturg. p. 978. Op. T. 2. Ed. Par.

[2] See *Waterland*. Import. of the Doctr. of the Trin. p. 232. And *Berrim.* Historic. Acc. of the Trinitar. Controvers. p. 138, 141.

[3] Vid. *Histor. Litterar. In Vita Greg. Thaumaturgi*. p. 132.



*doctrine*, at a time when it was warmly controverted, and in danger of being suppressed. But as the revelation of it, if admitted to be true, would put an end at once to all dispute, and give a divine Sanction to the doctrine itself, so the Dr. seems resolved not to part with it: for in his *Historical account of the Trinitarian controversy*, speaking on this very point, he says; “there are many arguments to convince us  
“of the genuineness and authority of this Creed of St. Gregory: I do not mean of it’s being taught him by revelation,  
“(*tho’ that may be well attested too, and will not seem incredible to those, who shall consider, how highly this great person*  
“*was distinguished by the charismata, or extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost*) but I mean, as to the certainty, of it’s  
“having been taught by St. Gregory, &c. [1].” From which we see, that tho’ his sole business in this place was, to prove the Creed to have been really Gregory’s, yet he could not forbear to acquaint us, that, if there was occasion, he could prove *the revelation* also to be genuine: since it cannot enter into his head, how any one should think it incredible, that, in those miraculous ages, a person of Gregory’s exalted character might be favored with a visit from heaven, by *the Virgin Mary* and *St. John the Apostle*.

The same Gregory of Nyssa relates likewise, “how his  
“Namesake, being upon a journey, was forced one night,  
“to take shelter in an Heathen Temple, famed for an  
“Oracle and divination; where the Dæmons used to appear

[1] Berrim. *ibid.* p. 138.



“ visibly and offer themselves to the Priests. But the holy  
 “ Father, by invoking the name of *Jesus*, put them all  
 “ to flight ; and by making the Sign of the Cross, pu-  
 “ rified the air, polluted by the steam of their sacrifices  
 “ ———the next morning when the Priest came to perform  
 “ his usual functions ; the Devils appeared, and acquainted  
 “ him, that they had been driven out the night before by a  
 “ stranger, and had not the power to return : nor was he  
 “ able to recall them by all the charms of his expiatory sa-  
 “ crifices. Upon this, the Priest pursued *Gregory* in great  
 “ wrath, and overtaking him on the road, threatened him  
 “ most terribly, for what he had done. But *Gregory*, de-  
 “ spising his threats, gave him to understand, that he had  
 “ a power superior to that of Devils, and could drive them  
 “ whithersoever he pleased. The Priest amazed at what  
 “ he said, began to beg, that for a proof of his power, he  
 “ would fetch them back again into the Temple ; to  
 “ which *Gregory* consenting, wrote this short note onely,  
 “ upon a Schedule of paper, *Gregory to Satan. Enter.* With  
 “ this, the Priest was dismissed ; and laying the little Sche-  
 “ dule upon the Altar, brought the Devils back again im-  
 “ mediately to their old Seats.” The miracle however had  
 the good effect of converting the Pagan Priest [1].

I have already given a passage from the Life of St. *Hila-  
 rion* the Monk, written by St. *Jerom*, as a specimen of the  
 fidelity of the writer.——But for a proof of the fabu-

[1] Vid. *Greg. Nyss. ibid. p. 981.*



lous genius of the fourth century, Mr. *Dodwell* refers us to another Life of *the Hermit Paul*, compiled by the same Father, which is filled with stories still more monstrous; “ of  
 “ *Satyrs and Fauns* presenting themselves to the Hermit,  
 “ and confessing their own mortality, and the folly of the  
 “ Gentiles in paying them any worship, and begging his re-  
 “ commendation of them to their common Lord, who  
 “ came to save the world: of a raven, bringing half a  
 “ loaf for sixty years successively to the Hermit, for his  
 “ daily food in the wilderness; and then a whole loaf,  
 “ when St. *Antony* came to visit him: of two Lions, com-  
 “ ing to assist *Antony* in the burial of *Paul*, by digging a  
 “ grave for him with their feet, and then departing with  
 “ the blessing of *Antony* [1].”

St. *Epiphanius*, Bishop of *Salamis* in *Cyprus*, who is said to have wrought miracles himself, both in his life-time and after it [2], affirms several false and absurd miracles from his own knowledge, which his advocates gently pass over, by remarking onely, that *this most holy Father was too credulous, or not so accurate*, as we could wish [3]. He declares,  
 “ that in imitation of our Saviour’s miracle at *Cana* in  
 “ *Galilee*, several fountains and rivers in his days were annu-

[1] Hieron. Vit. Pauli Eremit. Op. T. 4. par. 2. p. 71. Ed. Benedict.

[2] Vid. Vit. Epiphan. c. 37, 66, &c. Op. Tom. 2. p. 350. Edit. Par.

[3] Quæ de Melchisedeci parentibus narrat *Epiphanius*, redolent apocryphorum somnia, cujusmodi multa sunt in hoc opere bona fide a Sanctissimo Patre descripta. Petav. Not. in pag. 217. Tom. 2.

Majori fide digna, quam quæ habet alia pleraque Pater ille parum accuratus. Dodw. Differ. Iren. 2. § 29.



“ ally turned into wine. A fountain of *Cibyra* a City of  
 “ *Caria*, says he, and another at *Gerasa* in *Arabia*, prove  
 “ the truth of this. I myself have drunk out of the foun-  
 “ tain of *Cibyra*, and my brethren, out of the other at *Ge-*  
 “ *rasa*: and many testify the same thing of the river *Nile*  
 “ in *Ægypt* [1].” Should we then be asked here, as we  
 were before in a similar case; *will ye not believe a most*  
*holy Bishop, in a fact attested by his own senses?* the answer  
 is clear and short; *the fact is not credible.*

St. *Chrysostom*, celebrating the acts of the Martyr St. *Baby-*  
*las*, Bishop of *Antioch*, says; “ the Gentiles will laugh, to  
 “ hear me talk of the acts of persons dead, and buried,  
 “ and consumed to dust; but they are not to imagine, that  
 “ the bodies of Martyrs, like to those of common men,  
 “ are left destitute of all active force and energy, since  
 “ a greater power than that of the human soul is super-  
 “ added to them, the power of the Holy Spirit; which,  
 “ by working miracles in them, demonstrates the truth of  
 “ the resurrection.”——He then proceeds to inform us,  
 “ how the remains of this Martyr were removed by a cer-  
 “ tain Emperor, out of the City of *Antioch*, into a suburb  
 “ of it, called *Daphne*, famous for the delights of it’s situ-  
 “ ation, and the variety of pleasures, which it afforded to  
 “ it’s inhabitants, as well as for a celebrated Temple and

[1] Πεπώκαμεν ἀπὸ τῆς Κιβύρης, ἡμέτεροι δὲ ἀδελφοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν Γεράσῃ  
 πηγῆς—— καὶ πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ περὶ τῆς Νείλου τῆτο μαρτυροῦσι. Adv.  
 Hæres. l. 2. cxxx. p. 451. Tom. 1.



“ Oracle of *Apollo Daphneus*; to which the body of the Saint  
 “ was thought proper to be removed, for the sake of giving  
 “ some check to the lewdness and licentiousness, that reign-  
 “ ed in the place. The Coffin therefore was no sooner de-  
 “ posited in a chappel provided for it, than the Oracle of  
 “ *Apollo* was struck dumb at once: so that when *Julian* the  
 “ Apostate came afterwards to consult it, he could receive no  
 “ other answer from *Apollo*, but that the dead would not suffer  
 “ him to speak any longer [1]. Wherefore *Julian* command-  
 “ ed the bones of St. *Babylas* to be conveyed back again into  
 “ *Antioch*; but in the very moment, when they entered into  
 “ the City, the Statue of the God, and the roof of his Tem-  
 “ ple were destroyed by lightning, upon the intercession of  
 “ the Saint [2].” St. *Chrysostom* employs an intire Homily,  
 and a larger discourse, which follows it, in haranguing on this  
 same subject of *Babylas*; and on the blessings and dayly mira-  
 cles, wrought by the reliques of the Martyrs, to the edifica-  
 tion of the Church, and the confusion of unbelievers [3]. Yet  
 his History of this Saint is so evidently fabulous and ro-  
 mantic, that the *Benedictin Monks*, who published the last and

[1] “ By which answer we may understand, says Sir *Is. Newton*, that some  
 “ Christian was got into the place, where the Heathen Priests used to speak  
 “ through a pipe in delivering their Oracles.” See *Observat. on the Prophe-*  
*cies of Daniel*, par. 1. p. 210.

[2] Vid. *Oper. Tom. 2. p. 531, 533, 534, 564, &c.*

[3] Καὶ ὅτι ἐκ ἀπλῶς κομπᾶζων ταῦτα λέγω νῦν ——— ἵκανα μὲν τὸν λόγον  
 πεισῶσθαι, καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν ὑπὸ τῶν Μαθητῶν γινόμενα θαύματα.  
*Ibid. p. 555.*



best edition of his works, found it necessary to admonish the reader, *that it is written in a declamatory stile, overflowing with rhetorical figures, and for the most part destitute of truth* [1]. In which those learned Papists have shewn more candor as well as judgement, than our Protestant Doctor *Cave*; who, in his *Life of the same Babylas*, after relating the particular story just described, which he calls *one of the most memorable occurrences, that Church-antiquity has conveyed to us*, adds the following attestation to it.

“ The reader ’tis like, may be apt to scruple this story, as  
 “ favouring a little of superstition, and giving too much ho-  
 “ nor to the reliques of saints. To which I shall say no  
 “ more, than that the credit of it seems unquestionable; it  
 “ being reported not onely by *Socrates*, *Sozomen*, and *Theodo-*  
 “ *ret*, who all lived very near that time, but by *Chrysostom*,  
 “ who was born at *Antioch*, and was a long time Presbyter  
 “ of that Church, and was scholar there to *Libanius* the So-  
 “ phist, at the very time when the thing was done, and  
 “ an eye-witness of it; and who not onely preached the  
 “ thing, but wrote a discourse against the Gentiles on this  
 “ very subject; where he appeals to the knowledge both of  
 “ young and old then alive, who had seen it, and challenges  
 “ them to stand up and contradict, if they could, the truth  
 “ of what he related. Nay, which farther puts the case

[1] Argumentum libri, est historia Martyrii S. Babylæ — declamatorio more narrata, tropisque redundans; in qua plerumque veritatem desideres. Admonit. in Serm. ibid. p. 530.



“ past all peradventure, *Libanius* the Orator evidently confesses it, &c. [1]” Whereas all, which that Orator confesses, and which the *Benedictins* allow to be well grounded in the whole relation is, that the reliques of *Babylas* were carried back again, by *Julian’s* order, out of *Daphne* into the City; and that the Temple of the *Daphnean Apollo* was soon after destroyed in the night by fire; which the Christians declared to have been sent from heaven by the power of the Saint; and the Heathens ascribed to the revenge and contrivance of the Christians [2].

A Popish writer, with whom I have been engaged, in order to reprove my raillery on their fictitious Saints and Image-worship, has alledged also a most notable miracle, from this fourth century; which I shall here add to the Specimens already given.

“ When *Julian the Apostate* was pursuing his *Persian* expedition, and at the very time, when he is supposed to have been destroyed by the immediate hand of God, the Great St. *Basil* was standing before the *Image of the Blessed*

[1] See his *Lives of the Prim. Fathers*. Life of *Babyl.* Vol. I. p. 247.

[2] *Julian* suspected the Christians to have set fire to this Temple, on the account of his removal of the body of St. *Babylas*: for which reason, he ordered some of them to be put to the rack, and their great Church in *Antioch* to be shut up; as we are told by *Ammianus Marcellinus*; who mentions another report also, tho’ more slightly grounded, of a different cause of that accident. [l. 22. c. 13. Vid. it. *Julian. Misopogon.* Oper. T. 1. p. 361. Edit. Spanh. 1696.] The Christians, says *Sozomen*, took the fire to be sent from heaven at the request of the Martyr, but the Gentiles look upon it as the act of the Christians. lib. 5. c. xx.



“ *Virgin*, on which there was painted likewise the figure of  
 “ *St. Mercurius*, an eminent Martyr: and while *St. Basil*  
 “ was fervently praying, that the impious and atheistical *Julian*  
 “ might be cut off, he received this revelation from the  
 “ picture; out of which, the figure of the Martyr quite va-  
 “ nished for a little while, but presently appeared again, and  
 “ held out *a bloody spear* :” as a token of what had happened  
 “ in the same moment to *Julian* [1].”

But *Julian*’s death was foretold likewise by *visions*, and *divine revelations*, as the Ecclesiastical writers inform us, to several other Saints and holy men, in different parts of the world, who were severally addressing their prayers to God for his destruction [2]. Whence we cannot but observe, what a total change there was, both of principles and practice, between the Fathers of the fourth, and those of the preceding ages; or between the Church when persecuted, and when established in power and authority. For in the earlier times, under the very worst of the Heathen Emperors, and the cruellest persecutors of the Church, when the Christians were treated every where, as traitors to the government, all their Apologists, through the three first centuries, declare with

[1] Ἐξ ἧς εἰκόνος ἐμυήθη ταύτην τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν. ἑώρα γὰρ πρὸς μὲν βραχὺ ἀφανῆ τὸν μάρτυρα, μετ’ ὃ πολὺ δὲ, τὸ δόρυ ἡμαχμένον κατέχοντα. Joh. Damascen. Oper. T. 1. p. 327. E. Edit. Par. pr. Lequien.

N. B. This story is said to have been recorded by *Helladius*, the disciple and successor of *St. Basil*, in the Bishoprick of *Cæsarea*, in the Life, which he wrote of *St. Basil*.

[2] Vid. Sozom. lib. 6. c. 2.



one voice, that they were obliged by the precepts of their religion, to be of all men the most loyal to their Princes, and that it was their daily practice, to put up their united prayers for their prosperity. We pray, says *Tertullian*, for every Emperor; that he may have a long life, secure reign, a safe house, strong armies, faithful Senate, honest people, a quiet world, and whatsoever else, man, or Cæsar himself can wish [1]. Yet after the Church had gained a firm establishment, it's temper was quite altered; and the Emperors no sooner began to give them any disturbance, than their prayers were turned into curses; and the divine vengeance confessedly implored to destroy them. So true it is, what all the Popish writers have not scrupled to affirm, from *Pope Gregory the Great*, down to *Cardinal Bellarmine*, that it was not the want of will, but of the power onely to rebel, which made the primitive Christians so patient under the persecuting Emperors, and particularly under *Julian*, because the Church had not yet acquired strength enough, to controul the Princes of the earth [2].

Now it is agreed by all, that these Fathers, whose testimonies I have just been reciting, were the most eminent lights

[1] "Ὁθεν θεὸν μὲν μόνου προσκυνῶμεν, ὑμῖν δὲ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα χάρισται ὑπερεῖναι καὶ εὐχόμενοι μετὰ τῆς βασιλικῆς δυνάμεως καὶ σώφρονα τὸν λόγισμον ἔχοντας ὑμᾶς εὐρεθῆναι. Just. Martyr. Apol. 1. p. 26.

Oramus pro omnibus Imperatoribus, vitam illis prolixam, imperium securum — & quæcunque hominis & Cæsaris vota sunt. Apolog. § 30.

Deprecamur diebus ac noctibus & pro salute populi, & pro statu Imperatorum vestrorum. Vid. Act. Passion. Cyprian. apud Cyprian. p. 16. Edit. Rigaltii.

[2] See Chillingworth's Works, 7th Edit. p. 283. & Not. \*.



of the fourth century; all of them sainted by the Catholic Church; and highly revered at this day in all Churches, for their piety, probity and learning: yet from the specimens of them above given, it is evident, that they would not scruple, to propagate any fiction, how gross soever, which served to promote the interest either of Christianity in general, or of any particular rite or doctrine, which they were desirous to recommend. St. *Jerom* in effect confesses it; for after the mention of a silly story, concerning the Christians of *Jerusalem*, who used to shew, in the ruins of the Temple, *certain stones of reddish color*, which they pretended to have been stained by the blood of *Zacharias the Son of Barachias*, who was slain between the Temple and the Altar, he adds, *but I do not find fault with an error, which flows from an hatred of the Jews, and a pious zeal for the Christian faith* [1].

[1] Non condemnamus errorem, qui de odio Judæorum & fidei pietate descendit. Oper. T. 4. p. 113.

N. B. The same *Jerom* speaking, in another place, of the different manner, which writers found themselves obliged to use, in their controversial and their dogmatical writings, intimates, that in controversy, whose end was victory rather than truth, it was allowable, to employ every artifice, which would best serve to conquer an adversary: in proof of which, “ *Origen*, says he, *Methodius*, *Eusebius*, *Apollinaris*, have written many thousands of lines, against *Celsus* and *Porphry*: consider with what arguments and what slippery pro-  
“ blems, they baffle what was contrived against them by the Spirit of the De-  
“ vil: and because they are sometimes forced to speak; they speak not what  
“ they think, but what is necessary against those, who are called Gentiles. I  
“ do not mention the latin writers, *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Minutius*, *Victorinus*,  
“ *Lactantius*, *Hilarius*, lest I be thought, not so much to be defending myself,  
“ as accusing others, &c.” Op. T. 4. p. 2. p. 236.



If the miracles then of the fourth century, so solemnly attested by the most celebrated and revered Fathers of the Church, are to be rejected after all as fabulous, it must needs give a fatal blow to the credit of all the miracles even of the preceding centuries; since there is not a single Father, whom I have mentioned in this fourth age, who for zeal and piety, may not be compared with the best of the more ancient, and for knowledge and learning, be preferred to them all. For instance, there was not a person in all the primitive Church, more highly respected in his own days, than St. *Epiphanius*, for the purity of his life, as well as the extent of his learning. He was a Master of *five languages*, and has left behind him one of the most usefull works, which remain to us from antiquity. St. *Jerom*, who personally knew him, calls him, *the Father of all Bishops, and a shining Star among them; the pattern of ancient sanctity; the man of God of blessed memory; to whom the people used to flock in crouds, offering their little children to his benediction; kissing his feet; and catching the hem of his garment* [1].

All the rest were men of the same character, who spent their lives and studies in propagating the faith, and in combating the vices and heresies of their times. Yet none of them have scrupled, we see, to pledge their faith for the truth of facts, which no man of sense can believe, and which their warmest admirers are forced to give up as fabulous. If such persons then could willfully attempt to deceive; and if the

[1] Oper. Tom. 4. par. 2. p. 312, 313, 417, 443, 727.



sanctity of their characters cannot assure us of their fidelity; what better security can we have from those, who lived before them? or what cure for our Scepticism, with regard to any of the miracles above mentioned? was the first Assertor of them, *Justin Martyr*, more pious, cautious, learned, judicious, or less credulous than *Epiphanius*? or were those virtues more conspicuous in *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, *Arnobius*, and *Lactantius*, than in *Athanasius*, *Gregory*, *Chrysostom*, *Jerom*, *Austin*? No body, I dare say, will venture to affirm it. If these later Fathers then, biased by a false zeal or interest, could be tempted to propagate a known lie; or with all their learning and knowledge, could be so weakly credulous, as to believe the absurd stories, which they themselves attest; there must always be reason to suspect, that the same prejudices would operate even more strongly in the earlier Fathers; prompted by the same zeal and the same interests, yet indued with less learning, less judgement, and more credulity.

But whatever light the fourth Century may give us, in discovering the real character of the earlier ages, it affords us at least a sure presage, of what we are to expect from the fifth, into which we are now entering. *Dr. Waterland* himself allows, on the authority of *Nazianzen*, that the state of the Church towards the end of the fourth century was become very corrupt [1]: for that reason, as we have elsewhere seen, he durst not venture to appeal, in the case of it's miracles, to

[1] Import. of the Doct. of the Trin. p. 424.



any of the celebrated Fathers above mentioned, as being evidently infected with that corruption. The learned *Mosheim* also, a foreign Divine, and zealous advocate of Christianity, who, by his writings against the Freethinkers, as Dr. *Chapman* tells us, *has deserved the esteem of all good and learned men*, intimates his fears, “ that those, who search with any attention into the writings of the greatest and most holy Doctors of the fourth century, will find them all without exception, disposed *to deceive and to lie*, whenever the interest of religion requires it [1].” Since the degeneracy therefore of this age has obliged the most devoted admirers of antiquity, not onely to suspect, but to reject it’s miracles as spurious, we cannot be at a loss, what judgement we ought to form on the miracles of the following age, which is allowed by all to have been still more corrupt.

The succeeding Fathers however go on still as before, to assert the same miraculous gifts, and even more of them to the fifth, than to any of the preceding ages. Whence a certain infidel writer has taken occasion to censure the credit of Ecclesiastical History, as being *full of miracles, wrought by such madmen*, as *Symeon Stylites* [2], a Monk of the fifth century; who spent the greatest part of his life on the top of a pillar, from which he drew his surname; and whose wonderful acts are particularly related by *Theodore*t. Now whether this *Symeon* was a madman or not, the credit of Christianity

[1] See Dr. Chapm. Miscellan. Tracts p. 191, 207.

[2] See Christianity as old as the Creat. c. 8. p. 89.



is no way affected by it. The History of the Gospel, I hope may be true, though the History of the Church be fabulous. And if the ecclesiastic Historians have recorded many silly fictions, under the name of miracles, as they undoubtedly have, the blame must be charged to the writers, not to their religion. But the censure came from an Infidel, and for that reason, was at all events to be confuted; since to allow a grain of truth to one of that class, is to betray the cause of Christianity, and to strengthen the hands of it's enemies.

This is the principle, which generally animates the zeal, and glares through the writings of the modern advocates of our religion: and which in reality, has done more hurt and discredit to it, than all the attacks of it's open adversaries: and it was the same principle without doubt, that gave birth to the defence of *Symeon Stylites*, which Dr. *Chapman*, in his remarks on the Author referred to, has thought fit to attempt in the following words;

“ I know our Author too well, to take his judgement  
 “ either of madness or sense. 'Tis more than probable, that  
 “ it is madness with him, to believe any miracles at all,  
 “ of any person, or at any time. So that we are not to  
 “ wonder, if *Symeon* and his miracles have no sort of credit  
 “ with him. For this reason I address myself here, not to  
 “ him, but to those, who distinguish between truth and im-  
 “ posture, between clear and indisputable evidence, and that  
 “ which is dark and suspicious. The great *Theodoret*, whose  
 “ character



“ character for sense, learning and piety, is abundantly known  
 “ and confessed, was himself contemporary with *Symeon Stylites*,  
 “ *lites*, was personally and intimately acquainted with him;  
 “ conversed with him for many years together, and declares  
 “ himself an eye-witness to the wonderfull things related of  
 “ him. He has given us an account of a great part of his  
 “ Life, which he wrote, while *Symeon* was yet alive, and  
 “ appeals to all the world for the truth of what he says of  
 “ him. He farther tells us, that *Symeon* by his miracles  
 “ converted many thousands of Pagans, especially the *Ishmae-*  
 “ *lites* or *Saracens*, to the Christian religion; that he him-  
 “ self, at *Symeon*’s desire, gave many of them the Sacerdotal  
 “ benediction, and was in manifest danger of losing his life,  
 “ by the impatience and eagerness of the Barbarians to receive  
 “ it from him. If we may not admit such evidence as this  
 “ in proof of a matter of fact, I am afraid, we must  
 “ shake the evidence of all human testimony, and believe no-  
 “ thing, but what we see, and feel, and know ourselves. Nay  
 “ farther, our Author cannot prove, that there ever existed  
 “ such a man as *Symeon Stylites*, by better evidence, than that,  
 “ which I have produced, to prove his miracles [1].”

Here we see what a sort of character and language is prepared for those, who dare to reject the miracles of *Symeon*. They must be men, who *know not how to distinguish between truth and imposture; between indisputable and suspicious evidence; who shake the credit of all human testimony, and believe nothing;*

[1] See Miscell. Tracts p. 165.



but what they see themselves. And all this assurance is grounded on the single testimony of *Theodoret*, to whom, in order to enhance his authority, he has added, according to his usual way, the title of *the Great*. But as the Doctor has carried his defence of Monks and their miracles much farther, than any other Protestant, I believe, would venture to do, so it was natural to suspect, that he had been drawn into it by some Popish writer, of whom he had conceived a favorable opinion, and we find accordingly, that he has borrowed, not onely his notions, but his very expressions from *Monf. Tillemont*, who talks in the same pompous strain, of *Le Grand Theodoret*, whose evidence cannot be slighted, he says, without shaking the credit of all human testimony [1].

But let him borrow them from whomsoever he pleases; my business is, to inquire onely whether, what he has borrowed and so peremptorily affirmed, be true, or credible, or fit for a Protestant Divine, to impose upon the consciences of Christians. This therefore is the point, which I shall now procede to consider, from the authority of those very testimonies, to which he himself has referred us.

We are told then by *Theodoret*, “ that this *Symeon* spent the  
 “ first part of his life in certain Monasteries near *Antioch* in  
 “ *Syria*, mortifying his body by horrible austerities, not one-  
 “ ly beyond the rules of their ordinary discipline, but above  
 “ the force even of nature itself; till for his perseverance in  
 “ these extravagancies, contrary to the Admonitions of his

[1] See *Tillem. Memoir*. Vol. XV. p. 348.



“ rulers, he was turned out of the society, as giving an ex-  
“ ample, that might be dangerous or fatal to those, who at-  
“ tempted to imitate it. Upon this he retired to a separate  
“ Cave or Hut, where he took a fancy, after the example  
“ of *Moses* and *Elias*, to keep a fast and total abstinence from  
“ food, for forty intire days. But when another holy man  
“ called *Bassus*, represented to him the danger and even fin-  
“ of an attempt, which would probably destroy him, he  
“ complied so far, as to suffer ten loaves, and a pitcher of  
“ water to be immured with him in his cell, with a pro-  
“ mise to make use of them, if he happened to want any  
“ refreshment. *Bassus* then closed up his door with mud,  
“ and left him for forty days; at the end of which, he re-  
“ turned, and clearing away the mud from the door, found  
“ the ten loaves intire, and the pitcher also full, but *Symeon*  
“ stretched upon the ground, quite spiritless and unable to  
“ speak or stir, till by the care of his friend, and the applica-  
“ tion of the symbols of the holy mysteries, he was gra-  
“ dually restored to his strength and former health. From  
“ which time, as *Theodoret* adds, he had then persevered  
“ twenty eight years, in the same practice of fasting forty  
“ days in each year. During the first part of which days,  
“ he used constantly to stand: and when through want of  
“ nourishment he grew too weak to endure that posture, he  
“ then began to sit; but at the last, was forced to lie  
“ down half dead and almost spent [1].

[1] Vid. *Theodoret. Religios. Histor. p. 880. Oper. T. 3. Edit. Paris.*



His next whim was, “ to fix his perpetual station on  
 “ the top of a pillar, whose circumference was hardly of two  
 “ cubits : and after he had spent many years in that position,  
 “ like a statue upon it’s pedestal, on several different pillars,  
 “ he mounted one at last, thirty six cubits high, and lived  
 “ thirty years upon it : being placed in the middle region, as  
 “ it were, between heaven and earth ; where he conversed  
 “ with God, and glorified him with Angels ; offering up for  
 “ the men on earth his supplications to God, and drawing  
 “ down from heaven the blessings of God upon men [1].”  
 But because these pillars allowed no other posture but that  
 of standing, he contrived a method, which enabled him to  
 endure still the fatigue of his usual fasts. “ For he got  
 “ a beam fixed to the top of his pillar, to which he tied him-  
 “ self, and by that support held out the whole forty days  
 “ without changing his position ; till being strengthened by  
 “ heaven with a larger measure of grace, he no longer want-  
 “ ed that help, but stood all the time, without tasting the  
 “ least food, yet with ease and chearfulness [2].

The manner of passing his time on the pillar was this ; “ all  
 “ the nights and days also, till three in the afternoon, were  
 “ spent by him in prayer, in which he used continual bow-  
 “ ings of his body, and always touched his very toes with  
 “ his head. For this, says *Theodoret*, was easy to him, be-  
 “ cause he made but one meal in the week, and that a

[1] Ibid. p. 882.

[2] Ibid. 880.



“ very light one, so that his belly being generally empty,  
 “ gave him no obstruction in bending his back. One of  
 “ those, who stood by, looking upon him with *Theodoret*,  
 “ had the curiosity to count the number of his bowings,  
 “ but when he had counted to twelve hundred and forty  
 “ four, he was tired and would count them no longer [1].  
 “ On solemn Festivals, he stood with his hands stretched out  
 “ towards heaven, from the setting of the Sun, to it’s rising,  
 “ without a wink of sleep the whole night [2].

“ From three in the afternoon it was his practice, to preach  
 “ and to give divine lectures; to answer all quæstions and pe-  
 “ titions, which were offered to him; to cure diseases, and  
 “ to compose differences; but at Sun-setting he began to con-  
 “ verse again with God [3]. He wrought innumerable mi-  
 “ racles; giving health to the sick, children to the barren;  
 “ and dispensing sacred oil to those likewise who desired  
 “ it [4].” To many of which miracles *Theodoret* declares him-  
 self to have been an eye-witness, as well as to his gift of  
 prophecy, for he heard “ him foretell a famine and a pesti-  
 “ lence, and an irruption of locusts, and the death of one  
 “ of *Theodoret*’s enemies, fifteen days before it happened [5].  
 One of the miracles, which *Theodoret* saw, was this;  
 “ an eminent *Ismaelite* and believer in Christ, made a vow  
 “ to God in the presence of *Symeon*, that he would abstain  
 “ from all animal food during the rest of his life: but be-

[1] Ibid. 887. A.

[2] Ibid. D.

[3] Ib. 888. B.

[4] Ib. 885, 886, &c.

[5] Ib. 885.



“ ing tempted afterwards to break his vow, he resolved to  
 “ eat a fowl, and ordered it to be dressed for him according-  
 “ ly; but when he sat down to eat, he found the flesh  
 “ of it turned into stone. The Barbarian, amazed at this  
 “ miracle, ran away in all haste to the Saint, proclaiming his  
 “ secret crime to all people, and imploring the Saint, by the  
 “ omnipotence of his prayers, to release him from the bond  
 “ of this sin. There were many eye-witnesses of this mi-  
 “ racle, who handled the fowl, and found the part of it  
 “ about the breast, to be compounded of bone and of  
 “ stone [1].”

By these miracles and austerities, the fame of *Symeon*, as *Theodoret* says, was spread through the whole world: so that people of all nations and languages flocked to him in crouds from the remotest parts of the earth; from *Spain* and *Gaul*, and even *Britain* itself; and his name was so celebrated at *Rome*, that the *Artificers* of all kinds had little images of him, placed in the entrance of their shops, as a guard and security to them against all sorts of mischief [2].

This is the account in short of the Life of *Symeon Stylites*: the bare recital of which, tho’ attested by ten *Theodoret*s, must needs expose the absurdity of believing, that it could in any manner be suggested or directed by divine inspiration. Yet *Dr. Chapman* contends, that there is no better evidence for the very existence of *Symeon*, than we have for his miracles [3]. By which he means, I suppose, that we

[1] *Ib.* B.

[2] 882. A.

[3] *Miscell. Tracts*, p. 167.



have the same evidence for both; the testimony of the same *Theodoret*, which he imagines to be as good in the one case, as in the other: not reflecting, that the same witness, of whatever character he be, will necessarily find a very different degree of credit, according to the different nature of the facts, which he attests; and tho' credible in some, may be justly contemptible in others. For example, when we are told by *Theodoret*, and after him by *Evagrius*, that a certain Monk called *Symeon*, who was personally known to them, took a fancy to live upon a pillar, where he was seen every day by many thousands; we have no reason to doubt of it; the thing was notorious, and there were many such Enthusiasts in the same age; and every one of those thousands, who saw him, were as good witnesses of it, as *Theodoret* himself. But when we are told by the same writers, that *Symeon* was inspired by God, and performed many things above the force of human nature: this is a different case, which cannot command the same belief; being a matter of opinion, rather than of fact; of which very few could judge, fewer still be certain, and scarce one perhaps of all the thousands, who saw him, could be a competent witness: while the character of *Symeon* on the one side, and of *Theodoret* on the other, suggest many obvious reasons against the credibility of it.

To illustrate this more clearly by a similar instance from profane history. Two classical writers of undoubted credit, *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*, have each written the Life and acts of the Emperor *Vespasian*: who alone, they say, of all the Princes



before him, was made a better man, by his advancement to the Empire [1]. But the same writers also declare, that this good Emperor, by a divine admonition from the God Serapis, publicly restored a blind man to his sight, and a cripple to his limbs, in the view of the people of Alexandria: and that many years after his death, when there was no reward or temptation for telling such a lie, several witnesses were still living, who had seen those miracles performed, and bore testimony to the truth of them [2]. Now it is certain, that no body in any age, ever doubted of the existence of *Vespasian*, yet many probably in all, and every single man in the present, not only doubt, but reject the story of his miracles: tho' these last be affirmed by the same writers, who assure us of the first: to whose authority still we pay all the regard, that is due, by believing them in every thing, that is credible; in every thing, of which they were competent witnesses; and charging the absurd and fabulous part, to the superstition, prejudices, and false principles, which prevailed in those ages.

The case is the same with *Theodoret* and all the Ecclesiastical Historians, who have transmitted to us the Lives and miracles of the Monks, and other pious men of their own

[1] Solusque omnium ante se Principum, in melius mutatus est. Tacit. Hist. l. 1. c. 50.

[2] E plebe quidam luminibus orbatus, item alius debili crure, sedentem pro tribunali pariter adierunt, orantes opem valetudinis, demonstratam a *Serapide* per quietem. &c. Sueton. in Vit. c. 7.

Utrumque qui interfuere, nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium. Tacit. Hist. l. 4. c. 81.



times. We take their word, as far as reason and religion will permit us; and ascribe the rest, to the credulity, the prejudices, and erroneous principles, which infected all the writers of those days. The Romanists indeed roundly embrace and espouse all the absurd and fictitious stories, which they have delivered to us; and are under a necessity of doing so, since they teach the same corrupt doctrines, retain the same superstitious rites, and exercise the same usurped powers, for the sake of which, those very stories were originally forged. But no Protestants, as far as I have observed, except the two Doctors above mentioned, have ever attempted to defend either the miracles, or the principles of the fifth century; but on the contrary, have constantly signified either their suspicion, or utter contempt of them.

Mr. *Dodwell*, whose piety and zeal for the honor of Christianity were as conspicuous as his learning, declares, “that nothing does so much discredit to the cause of miracles in general, among the Infidels and Atheists, as the impostures of the later ages; meaning the fourth, fifth, and following centuries. These, says he, they oppose to the undoubted credit of the earlier ages; and because these false prodigies deceived the whole world, they infer, that the ancient ones likewise, tho’ false, might impose in the same manner upon the credulity of mankind [1].”

[1] Atqui nihil est quod miraculorum causæ universæ apud Atheos magis noceat, quam recentiorum Fabulatorum *τεγαλίσματα*. &c. *Dodw. Dissert. Iren.* 2. § 69.



Dr. *Cave*, the large extent of whose faith shines through every page of his writings, yet plainly intimates his suspicion, of what *Theodore*t has attested concerning this very *Symeon*: for speaking of the amazing austerities, which he practised, he adds, *moreover, if the Greek writers are to be regarded, he wrought innumerable miracles* [1].

Mr. *Collier* also, whose Ecclesiastical History shews, that miracles even of the grossest kind were of no hard digestion with him, could not yet digest these of our *Symeon*, but declares them to be wholly *fabulous, and such, as render the truth itself suspected* [2].

Dr. *Hody*, so highly esteemed for his critical and theological learning, observes, “ that stories concerning miracles are  
“ common to all the writers of Lives, among the Christians  
“ of the middle ages, tho’ otherwise good authors: and  
“ that the professed Historians themselves, as *Theodore*t and  
“ *Evagrius*, are full of relations; which were the result of a  
“ superstitious piety [3].

Since the most learned then, as well as orthodox of our Divines, and the most conversant also in Ecclesiastical antiquity, have so strongly signified their distrust, both of the testimony of *Theodore*t, and the particular acts of this *Symeon*, it is surprizing, that Dr. *Chapman* should think it of service to Christianity, to lay so great a stress upon them, and in so per-

[1] *Histor. Litterar. T. 1. p. 439.*

[2] See *Dictionary in Symeon. Styl.*

[3] *The Case of Sees vacated by an unjust deprivation. c. x. p. 120.*



empty a manner, to vindicate the credit of miracles, whose sole tendency is to recommend, as a perfect pattern of the Christian life, the most extravagant enthusiasm and contemptible superstition, that any age or history perhaps has ever produced. For that this was really the case, is evident from the writings of *Theodoret* himself, whose *Life of Symeon Stylites*, is a part onely of his *religious history*, as it is called; filled with the *Lives of thirty Monks*, of the same class and character; distinguished by their peculiar austerities; and vying with each other, who could invent the most whimsical methods and painful arts of mortifying their bodies.

One of these called *Baradatus*, contrived a sort of cage for his habitation, coarsly formed of lattice work, so wide and open, as to expose him to all the inclemencies of the weather, and so low at the same time, that it could not admit the full height of his body, but obliged him to *stand always in the posture of stooping* [1].

Another of them called *Thalaleus*, of a very bulky size, suspended himself in the air, in a cage of a different kind, contrived by himself, and made so low and so strait also, that it left him no more room, than to sit with *his head perpetually bent down between his knees*; in which posture, he had spent *ten years*, when *Theodoret* first saw him [2]. Yet all these ridiculous whims and extravagancies are considered by *Theodoret*, as the *suggestions of the holy Spirit* [3], and di-

[1] *Histor Religios.* c. xxvii.

[2] *Ibid.* c. xxviii.

[3] Ἐγὼ δὲ τῆς θείας ἀνευ οἰκονομίας ταύτην πεισὺν γενέσθαι τὴν σάβην. *ib.* p. 882. B.



vine inventions, to baffle the artifices of the Devil; or so many *ladders*, as he tells us, *by which they mounted up to heaven* [1]; and which were all confirmed by miracles, as a proof of the divine approbation.

These were the wonder-workers, and these the miracles of the fifth century; the character of which Dr. *Chapman* sums up to this effect in the following articles.

1. That they were of a public nature, and performed in such a manner, as left no room for delusion.

2. That they were attended with beneficial effects, which could not possibly have gained credit, unless the strongest evidence of sense had proved them to be true.

3. That the end of them was not to confirm any idle errors or superstitions, but purely to advance the glory of truth and virtue.

4. That the accounts of them are given by men of unquestionable integrity, piety, and learning, who were eye-witnesses of many of the facts, and declare in the most solemn manner, that they knew them to be true.

[1] Καὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας οἱ τρόφιμοι τῆς εἰς οὐρανοῦ ἀνόδου πολλὰς καὶ διαφορὰς ἐμνησαντο κλίμακας. Ib. p. 889. A.



5. That they were far from being vain and unnecessary, so as to render them doubtfull to after ages—but were attested by the strongest moral evidence, equal to that, by which most of the ancient miracles are supported.

6. That they are incapable of giving any countenance to the fabulous pretences of the Papists: and that a Protestant of common capacity will discern as much difference between them and the Popish miracles, as between gold and brass, between light and darkness [1].

Yet from the short specimen of these miracles already given, and much more, from a full list of them, which, if it were required, may hereafter be given, the very contrary character of them, I am persuaded, will appear to be the true one, to all unprejudiced readers, in every one of those articles.

1. That they were all of such a nature, and performed in such a manner, as would necessarily inject a suspicion of fraud and delusion.

2. That the cures and beneficial effects of them, were either false, or imaginary, or accidental.

[1] Miscell. Tracts, p. 175, &c.

3. That



3. That they tend to confirm the idlest of all errors and superstitions.

4. That the integrity of the witnesses is either highly questionable, or their credulity at least so gross, as to render them unworthy of any credit.

5. That they were not onely vain and unnecessary, but generally speaking, so trifling also, as to excite nothing but contempt.

And lastly, that the belief and defence of them, are the onely means in the world, that can possibly support, or that does in fact give any sort of countenance, to the modern impostures in the Romish Church.

Then as to the Monks also, who are said to have wrought those miracles, the Doctor is not less zealous in defending and extolling all their extravagancies. He declares, “ that  
“ they were intended for the best and most excellent purposes [1]. That all the friends to Christianity must  
“ think, that in their voluntary austerities, they shewed  
“ such prudence, virtue, and greatness of mind, as deserve  
“ the highest encomiums of posterity [2]. And that the  
“ ancient Monasteries were very different from the modern;  
“ quite remote from the corruptions of Popery, and de-

[1] Ibid. p. 162.

[2] Ibid. p. 165.



“ serving the approbation of the strictest Protestants [1].”  
Yet for my own part, notwithstanding all his panegyric on those primitive Monks and monasteries, I shall not scruple to own, 1st, That I look upon the whole institution of monkery, from what age or what Saint soever it drew it's origin, to be contrary not onely to the principles of the Gospel, but to the interests of all civil society, and the chief source of all the corruptions, which have ever since infested the Christian Church. 2dly, That by all, which I have ever read of the old, and have seen of the modern Monks, I take the preference to be clearly due to the last, as having a more regular discipline, more good learning, and less superstition among them than the first [2].

Before

[1] Ibid. p. 180, 181:

[2] Sir *Is. Newton* has shewn, that the Monks are the spawn and genuin offspring of those Hereticks, who in the second and third centuries, affected an extraordinary strictness of life: forbidding to marry and to eat the flesh of animals; and practising many absurd austerities of fastings and watchings, which they enjoined as necessary to all Christians: whose doctrines and practices were rejected and condemned by all the Churches of those ages. But certain Enthusiasts, near the beginning of the fourth century, possessed with the same principles, yet with some little refinement and correction of them, retired into the deserts, where they spent their lives with an high reputation of sanctity, in exercises of devotion and divine contemplation; not imposing the same severities on all, as their predecessors, the Heretics had done, but on those onely, who voluntarily preferred the same monastic life. These therefore began to be highly revered, and before the end of the fourth century, increased so fast, that they overflowed both the Greek and the Latin Church like a torrent: especially when *Constantin* the Great professed to esteem and honor them above all Christians; being persuaded, as *Eusebius* tells us, that God did surely dwell in those souls, who had devoted themselves intirely to his service. In *Ægypt* therefore,

Z

where



Before we take leave of this subject, I shall just add a word or two concerning the character of *Theodore* himself, to whose testimony Dr. *Chapman* pays so extraordinary a regard, and whose authority he declares to be decisive in the case before us. The learned *Monf. Du Pin*, in his account of him, extracted from his writings, says, “ that he was  
 “ born at *Antioch* A. D. 386. that his birth was accompa-  
 “ nied by miracles, both before and after it, which he him-  
 “ self relates in his religious history : that, *if we may be-*  
 “ *lieve him*, his mother was healed of an incurable disease in  
 “ her eye, by one *Peter* a Monk : that upon the prayers of  
 “ another Monk, called *Macedonius*, God granted her to  
 “ conceive a son, after thirteen years of barrenness, and to  
 “ bring him safely into the world : that by the prayers of  
 “ the first of those Monks, *Peter*, she was preserved also  
 “ from death after her delivery : and that her husband and  
 “ her son had often felt the effects of *Peter*’s virtue and sanc-  
 “ tity, and were cured of their distempers by touching onely  
 “ his girdle [ 1 ].”

This account, I say, is drawn from *Theodore* himself ; whence we learn, that he was nursed and trained in all the bi-

where this enthusiasm principally reigned, a third part of the people are said to have betaken themselves to the deserts : whence they soon spread themselves through the Christian world, and were the ringleaders in establishing the worship of Saints, and reliques, and all those other Superstitions, with which the fourth and all succeeding centuries ever after abounded. Observat. on the Proph. of Dan. par. 1. c. XIII.

[ 1 ] See *Du Pin*’s account of *Theodore*, Vol. IV. p. 55.



gottry and superstition, with which that age abounded: taught from his very cradle, to venerate Monks and their miracles: and made to believe, with the first knowledge which he received, that he owed his very existence to the efficacy of their prayers. He tells us, “ that his mother sent him once “ every week to beg the blessing of the Monk, *Peter*; and “ that he went as often also, to receive the instructions and “ benediction of the other Monk, *Macedonius*; who never “ failed to remind him, of the great pains, which it had “ cost, to bring him into the world, and how many nights “ he had spent in praying to God for nothing else, but his “ birth [1].” And as *Theodoret* is said to have been very tenacious of the principles, which he had once imbibed [2], so it was his constant practice through his whole life, to visit the cells and habitations of all the celebrated Monks of those times; with whose lives and miracles he has filled his *religious history*: from which I shall here transcribe a story or two, out of the great number, which he has recorded, of the same sort, and of his own knowledge, as a specimen both of the judgement and the fidelity of the compiler.

In his life of the Monk *Peter*, he declares, “ that his “ very garments wrought wonders, like to those of St. *Paul*:

[1] Vid. Theodor. Hist. Religios. c. 9. p. 821. E. it. c. 13. p. 840. D. 839. D.

[2] Animo erat excelso & elato; sententiæ, quam semel imbiberat, tenacissimus, injuriarum & contradictionum haud satis patiens &c. Cave Hist. Litt. de Theodorit. T. 1. p. 406.



“ which I do not mention, says he, by way of hyperbole,  
 “ but with the testimony of truth for what I am saying.  
 “ For his girdle made of coarse linnen, being very broad and  
 “ long, he cut it into two parts, with the one of which  
 “ he girded his own loins, and mine, with the other.  
 “ This last my mother has often applied to me and to my Fa-  
 “ ther, when we were sick, and driven away our distem-  
 “ pers by it; and made use of it also herself, as a remedy  
 “ for her own health. Many of our acquaintance, who  
 “ knew this, frequently borrowed the girdle, for the ser-  
 “ vice of other sick people, and always found the same  
 “ good effects of it's virtue: till a certain person, who  
 “ borrowed it, ungratefull to his benefactors, never restored  
 “ it, and so we were deprived of the benefit of this gift [1].”  
 In the life of another Monk, called *James*, he tells this  
 story, “ that the reliques of some of the ancient *Patriarchs*,  
 “ *Prophets*, and *Apostles* were brought to him in a chest from  
 “ *Phœnicia* and *Palæstine*, and received by a public proces-  
 “ sion of all the orders of the Clergy and the Layety. But  
 “ the Monk *James* did not think fit to assist at this solem-  
 “ nity, having conceived some doubts, it seems, whether the  
 “ reliques, said to be *John Baptist's*, were really so or not.  
 “ Upon which, in the night following, as he was praying,  
 “ there appeared to him a certain person cloathed in white,  
 “ and demanded of him, *why he did not come out to meet*  
 “ *them?* and when *James* asked, who they were, of whom

[1] Hist. Relig. c. ix. p. 826. B.



“ he spake ; he replied, those, who came the other day  
 “ from *Phœnicia* and *Palæstine*. The next night also the  
 “ same person appeared to him again ; and in order to re-  
 “ move all his scruples, brought along with him St. *John*  
 “ *Baptist*, and the *Patriarch Joseph*, who were severally pre-  
 “ sented to him, and held discourse with him on the subject  
 “ of their reliques [1].” With these stories, I shall leave  
 it to the reader to determine, whether a writer of this  
 turn and character can reasonably be thought unprejudiced,  
 and of an authority uncontestable, or worthy indeed of any  
 credit at all, where the honor of Monks, and the reality of  
 their miracles are the points in quæstion.

The same *Monf. Du Pin*, after he has given us an ab-  
 stract of *Theodoret's religious History*, adds the following re-  
 flection : “ this History contains many things remarkable, con-  
 “ cerning the discipline of this time. By it we see, that  
 “ great honor was given to the Saints ; that they were invok-  
 “ ed ; that men expected to be helped by their prayers ;  
 “ that their reliques were sought after with great earnestness ;  
 “ that people believed very easily in them ; attributed great  
 “ virtue and many miracles to them ; and were very credu-  
 “ lous &c. [2].” But tho’ the whole turn and purpose of  
*Theodoret's sacred History*, tends to strengthen the interest of  
 the Romish, and to hurt the credit of the Protestant cause ;  
 by celebrating the forged miracles of *Monks, and Saints, and*

[1] Ibid. c. xx1. p. 862. D.

[2] See *Du Pin*, ibid. p. 65.



*reliques, and holy water, and sacred oil, it is curious to observe, with what a different temper, the Popish writer, Mons. Du Pin, and the Protestant writer, Dr. Chapman, have each expressed themselves, on the subject of his testimony. The Papist, candidly intimating his doubts, says; if we may believe Theodoret, such and such miracles were performed. The Protestant on the contrary, contemning all doubts, declares, that we must believe him, that his evidence is uncontestable, that to reject it, is to destroy the faith of history* [1]. The fortunes of these two writers were as different also, as their principles: the candor of the Papist being thought too favorable to Protestantism, was censured and disgraced by the Popish Bishops; the zeal of the Protestant, tending directly to Popery, was extolled and rewarded by the Protestant Bishops.

We have dwelt already so long on the miracles of the fifth century, that it must be needless, to examine the particular merit of that miracle, which Dr. Berriman has so accurately defended. I shall employ therefore but a very few words upon it. The story is this: “*Hunneric the Vandal, a Christian Prince, of the Arian heresy, in his persecution of the orthodox party in Africa, ordered the tongues of a certain society of them to be cut out to the roots: but by a surprizing instance of God’s good Providence, they*

[1] *If we may not admit such evidence as this in proof of a matter of fact, I am afraid, we must shake the evidence of all human testimony, and believe nothing but what we see, feel, and know ourselves.* Miscel. Tracts p. 167. it. p. 174, &c.



“ were enabled to speak articulately and distinctly without  
“ their tongues ; and so continuing to make open pro-  
“ fession of the same doctrine, they became not onely  
“ the preachers, but living witnesses of it's truth ; and a  
“ perpetual rebuke to the *Arian* faction [1].” This mi-  
racle is attested by several contemporary writers, who affirm,  
that they had seen and heard some of those Confessors  
*speaking distinctly, after they had lost their tongues.*

Now it may not improbably be supposed on this occa-  
sion, that tho' their tongues were ordered to be cut to the  
roots, and are said to have been so cut, yet the sentence  
might not be so strictly executed, as not to leave in some of  
them, such a share of that organ, as was sufficient, in a  
tolerable degree, for the use of speech. It is remarka-  
ble also, that two of this company are said to have utterly lost  
the faculty of speaking ; who had been deprived perhaps of  
their intire tongues : for tho' this be ascribed, to the pecu-  
liar judgement of God, for a punishment of the immoralities,  
of which they were afterwards guilty, yet that seems to  
be a forced and improbable solution of the matter. We are  
told likewise, that another of these Confessors, *who had been  
dumb from his birth, yet by losing his tongue with the rest, ac-  
quired also the use of speech :* which is a circumstance so  
singular and extraordinary, that it carries with it a suspici-  
on of art and contrivance, to enhance the luster of the miracle.

[1] See Berrim. Historic. account of the Trinitar. Controv. p. 327, &c.  
and Dr. Chapm. Misc. Tracts, p. 174.



But to come still more close to the point. If we should allow after all, that the tongues of these Confessors were cut away to the very roots; what will the learned Doctor say, if this boasted miracle, which he so strenuously defends, should be found at last to be no miracle at all? The tongue indeed has generally been considered, as absolutely necessary to the use of speech: so that to hear men talk without it, might easily pass for a miracle, in that credulous age; especially, when it gave so illustrious a confirmation to the orthodox faith, and so signal an overthrow to the *Arian Heresy*. Yet the opportunities of examining the truth of the case by experiment, have been so rare in the world, that there was always room to doubt, whether there was any thing miraculous in it or not. But we have an instance in the present century, indisputably attested, and published about thirty years ago, which clears up all our doubts, and intirely decides the quæstion. I mean the case of a *Girl, born without a tongue, who yet talked as distinctly and easily, as if she had enjoyed the full benefit of that organ*: a particular account of which is given, in *the memoirs of the Academy of Sciences at Paris*, drawn up by an eminent Physician, who had carefully examined the mouth of the Girl, and all the several parts of it, in order to discover, by what means her speech was performed without the help of a tongue: which he has there explained with great skill and accuracy. In the same account he refers us likewise to another instance, published about eighty years before, by a  
*Surgeon*



*Surgeon of Saumur, of a boy, who at the age of eight or nine years, lost his tongue, by a gangrene or ulcer, occasioned by the small pox, yet retained the faculty of speaking, in the same manner as the Girl [1].*

Let our Doctor then defend this miracle with all the power of his zeal and learning: let him urge the testimonies of *Senators, Chancellors, Bishops, Archbishops and Popes*; of persons, who *had too much learning and judgement*, he says, *to be deceived in so important a fact, tho' they lived an hundred years after it*; of *Æneas also of Gaza, who opened their very mouths*, as he tells us, *to make his observations with more exactness [2].* Yet the humble testimony of this single Physician, grounded on real experiment, will overturn at once all his pompous list of dignified authorities, and convince every man of judgement, that this pretended miracle, like all the other fictions, which have been imposed upon the world, under that character, owed it's whole credit to our ignorance of the powers of nature.

In short; when we reflect on the corrupt and degenerate state of the Church, in the end of the fourth century, allowed by the most diligent inquirers into Antiquity; and that this age was the pattern to all that succeeded it; in which the same corruptions were not onely practised, but agreeably to the nature of all corruption, carried still to a greater excess, and improved from bad to worse, down to the time of the

[1] *Memoires de L'Acad. des Scienc. Ann. 1718. p. 6.*

[2] See Berrim. *ibid.*



Reformation; we may safely conclude, without weighing the particular scruples, which may arise upon each single miracle, that they were all, in the gross, of the same class and species, the mere effects of fraud and imposture. For we can hardly dip into any part of Ecclesiastical History, of what age soever, without being shocked by the attestation of several, which from the mere incredibility of them, appear at first sight to be fabulous. This is confessed on all sides, even by the warmest defenders of the Primitive Fathers, and cannot be accounted for in any other way, than by ascribing it, to the experience, which those Fathers had, of the blind credulity and superstition of the ages, in which they lived, and which had been trained by them, to consider *the impossibility of a thing, as an argument for the belief of it* [1]. But in whatever light we contemplate these stories; whether as believed, or as forged by them, or as affirmed onely, and not believed; it necessarily destroys their credit in all other miraculous relations whatsoever. Yet it is surprizing to see, with what ease, the Advocates of these miracles overlook and condemn all reflections of this kind, and think it sufficient to tell us, that *the Fathers, tho' honest, were apt to be very credulous*: for with these disputants, credulity, it seems, how gross soever, casts not the least slur upon their testimony;

[1] *Tertullian*, disputing against certain Heretics, who denied the reality of Christ's human nature; reasons thus. "The Son of God was crucified: it is no shame to own it, because it is a thing to be ashamed of. The Son of God died: it is wholly credible, because it is absurd. When buried, he rose again to life: it is certain, because it is impossible. *De Carne Christi.* § 5.



which, in all cases, where it does not confute itself by its own extravagance, they maintain to be convincing and decisive, and superior to all suspicion. Whereas the sole inference, which reason would teach us to draw from an attestation of miracles, so conspicuously fabulous, is; that the same witnesses are not to be trusted in any; as being either incapable, from a weakness of judgement, of discerning the truth and probability of things; or determined by craft and fraud, to defend every thing that was usefull to them. In a word; in all inquiries of this nature, we may take it for a certain rule; that those, who are conscious of the power of working true miracles, can never be tempted either to invent, or to propagate any, which are false; because the detection of any one, would taint the credit of all the rest, and defeat the end proposed by them. But Impostors are naturally drawn, by a long course of success, into a security, which puts them off their guard, and tempts them gradually, out of mere wantonness, and contempt of those, whom they had so frequently deluded, to stretch their frauds beyond the bounds of probability, till by repeated acts of this kind, they tire the patience of the most credulous, and expose their tricks to the scorn even of the populace.

I have now thrown together all, which I had collected for the support of my argument, or as much at least, as I thought sufficient to illustrate the real state of the primitive miracles: and if we cast up the sum of all that boasted evidence, which the *unanimity of the Fathers, the tradition*



of the Catholic Church, and the faith of history have produced at last on the other side, towards the confirmation of the said miracles, we shall find the whole, to amount in reality to no proof at all. For to run over them all again in short.

The gift of *raising the dead*, is affirmed onely by the single authority of *Irenæus*, Bishop of *Lyons*; and was either not known, or not believed at least, in the very same age, by another Bishop, full as venerable, *Theophilus* of *Antioch*. The gift of *tongues*, which rests likewise on the single testimony of the same *Irenæus*; is confuted even by himself, who complains of his own want of it, in the very work of propagating the Gospel. The gift of *expounding the Scriptures*, which is reckoned commonly with the rest, and claimed in particular by *Justin Martyr*, is allowed, to have had no subsistence at all, in any age, or any writer of the primitive Church. The gift of *casting out Devils*, the most celebrated of them all, is reduced to nothing, by the accounts even of the Ancients themselves, which plainly testify, that it had no effect in many cases, and could not work a perfect cure in any. And as to other diseases, where oil especially was applied, they might probably enough be cured without a miracle; or by the same arts, with which the same cures were performed among the Heathens: which, tho' the undoubted effects of fraud, were yet managed so dexterously, as to be constantly ascribed by the Christians to the power of Dæmons. Lastly, the gift of *Prophetic visions and trances*, was of a kind, which could not easily be proved to the satisfaction of any; was



was of no service therefore to the propagation of the Gospel, or the conviction of unbelievers; being wholly exercised among the Christians themselves; and owing it's chief credit to Heretics and Enthusiasts; and always suspected by the sober and judicious: so that, after flourishing for a while through a visionary generation or two, it presently after fell into utter contempt.

This then being the real state of the miracles of the primitive Church, I freely commit them once more to the *Chapmans*, the *Berrimans*, and the *Stebbings*; to defend and enjoy them, as much as they please; happy without doubt, in this sceptical age, to find themselves blessed with that heroic faith, which can remove mountains, and beat down every obstacle, which sense, or reason, or fact can possibly oppose to it. Dr. *Chapman* has declared beforehand, *that whenever my larger work should appear, the primitive Fathers would find greater friends to their memory, and abler advocates to their cause, than I would wish to exist* [1]. That time is now come; and those abler Advocates expected: but let them appear when they will, I am so far from grudging their help to the Fathers, that I wish them the ablest, which Popery itself can afford: for Protestantism, I am sure, can supply none, whom they would chuse to retain in their cause; none, who can defend them, without contradicting their own profession, and disgracing their own character; or produce anything, but what deserves to be laughed at, rather than answered. I must however except one, who acts indeed with

[1] See *Jes Cabal farther opened*, p. 45.



a better grace and more consistency : for when I had treated him by mistake, as a *Protestant*, he flatly disowns the name, and calls himself a *Catholic Christian* [1]; the same title, which a Popish writer had before assumed, in his remarks on my *Letter from Rome* ; and what all these Advocates, who hang, as it were, between the two religions, affect to assume, that they may evade for a while the more invidious name of Papist.

V. All that remains, towards the final confirmation of my argument, is, to refute, as I promised, some of the most plausible objections, which have been made to it by my Antagonists ; and which by humouring the prejudices and prepossessions of many pious Christians, seem the most likely, to make an impression to it's disadvantage.

§ 1. In the first place then ; It is objected, that by the character, which I have given of the ancient Fathers, *the authority of the books of the New Testament*, which were transmitted to us through their hands, will be rendered *precarious and uncertain*.

To which I answer ; that the objection is trifling and groundless, and that the authority of those books does not depend upon the faith of the Fathers, or of any particular set of men, but on the general credit and reception which they found, not onely in all the Churches, but with all the

[1] See Apologetic. Epist. p. 27, 28.



private Christians of those ages, who were able to purchase copies of them: among whom, tho' it might perhaps be the desire of a few to corrupt, yet it was the common interest of all, to preserve, and of none, to destroy them. And we find accordingly, that they were guarded by all with the strictest care, so as to be concealed from the knowledge and search of their heathen adversaries, who alone were desirous to extirpate them. After such a publication therefore, and wide dispersion of them from their very origin, it is hardly possible, that they should either be corrupted, or suppressed, or counterfeited by a few, of what character or abilities soever; or that, according to the natural course of things, they should not be handed down from age to age, in the same manner, with the works of all the other ancient writers of *Greece* and *Rome*, which, tho' transmitted through the hands of many profligate and faithless generations of men, yet have suffered no diminution of their credit on that account: for tho' in every age there were several perhaps, who, from crafty and selfish motives, might be disposed to deprave, or even to suppress some particular books, yet their malice could reach onely to a few copies, and would be restrained therefore from the attempt, or corrected at least after the attempt, by the greater number of the same books, which were out of their reach, and remained still incorrupt. But besides all this, there were some circumstances peculiar to the books of the New Testament, which insured the preservation of them more effectually, than of any other



other ancient books whatsoever; the divinity of their character; and the religious regard, which was paid to them by all the sects and parties of Christians; and above all, the mutual jealousies of those very parties, which were perpetually watching over each other, lest any of them should corrupt the sources of that pure doctrine, which they all professed to teach and to deduce from the same books. Let the craft therefore of the ancient Fathers be as great, as we can suppose it to be: let it be capable of adding some of their own forgeries for a while to the Canon of Scripture; yet it was not in the power of any craft, to impose spurious pieces, in the room of those genuine ones, which were actually deposited in all Churches, and preserved with the utmost reverence, in the hands of so many private Christians.

But I may go a step farther, and venture to declare; that if we should allow the objection to be true, it cannot in any manner hurt my argument: for if it be natural and necessary, that the craft and credulity of witnesses should always detract from the credit of their testimony; who can help it? or on what is the consequence to be charged, but on that nature and constitution of things, from which it flows? or if the authority of any books be really weakened, by the character which I have given of the Fathers, will it follow from thence, that the character must necessarily be false, and that the Fathers were neither crafty nor credulous? that surely can never be pretended; because the craft and credulity which are charged upon them must be determined by another sort of evidence; not



not by consequences, but by facts ; and if the charge be confirmed by these, it must be admitted as true, how far soever the consequences may reach.

§ 2. It has been alledged, “ that all suspicion of fraud  
 “ in the case of the primitive miracles seems to be precluded,  
 “ by that public appeal and challenge, which the Christian  
 “ Apologists make to their enemies the Heathens, to come and  
 “ see with their own eyes the reality of the facts which  
 “ they attest.” But this objection, tho’ it may seem plausible indeed to a common reader, yet to all, who are acquainted with the condition of the Christians in those days, and the difficulty of making their Apologies known to the world, will be found to have no real weight in it. The Gospel indeed soon began to make a considerable progress among the vulgar, and to gain some few also of a more distinguished rank, yet continued to be held in such contempt by the generality of the better sort, through the three first centuries, that they scarce ever thought it worth while to make any inquiry about it, or to examine the merit of it’s pretensions. The principal writers of *Rome*, who make any mention of the Christians, about the Time of *Trajan*, plainly shew, that they knew nothing more of them, or their religion, than what they had picked up, as it were, by chance, from the gross misrepresentation of common fame, and speak of them accordingly, as *a set of despicable, stubborn, and even wicked Enthusiasts.*



*Suetonius* calls them, *a race of men of a new and mischievous superstition* [1]. And *Tacitus*, describing the horrible tortures, which they suffered under *Nero*, for the pretended crime of burning the City of *Rome*, says; “ that they  
 “ were detested for their flagitious practices; possessed with an  
 “ abominable superstition; and condemned, not so much for  
 “ their supposed crime of setting fire to the City, as for the  
 “ hatred of all mankind: and tho’ they deserved the most  
 “ exemplary punishments, yet it raised some pity towards  
 “ them, to see them so miserably destroyed, not on the account of the public utility, but to satiate the cruelty of a  
 “ single man [2]”.

*Pliny* also, when he was the Governor of a Province, in which the Christians were very numerous, and under an actual persecution in the reign of *Trajan*, yet in his celebrated letter to that Emperor concerning them, declares;  
 “ that he had never been present at any of their examinations,  
 “ and did not so much as know, for what they were punished, or how far they deserved punishment: that  
 “ by all the inquiries, which he had since made, he could  
 “ not discover any practices among them, but what were  
 “ harmless and innocent.——And nothing in short, but a

[1] Afflicti suppliciis Christiani: genus hominum superstitionis novæ & maleficæ. in *Ner. c.* 16.

[2] Quos per flagitia invisos, vulgus Christianos appellabat— exitiabilis Superstitio rursus erumpebat— haud perinde in crimine incendii, quam odio humani generis, convicti—&c. *Ann. l.* 15. 44.

“ wretched



“ wretched and extravagant superstition, which had spread  
 “ itself very wide, among persons of both sexes, of every  
 “ age and condition; which might however be subdued by  
 “ gentler methods; by moderating the rigor of the perse-  
 “ cution, and pardoning the penitent; by which lenity,  
 “ great numbers of them had already been recalled to their  
 “ ancient worship” [1].

This is the whole account, which we have of the Primi-  
 tive Christians, from the best Heathen writers, to the time of  
*Antoninus Pius*: in whose reign, and that of his Successor,  
*M. Aurelius*, the ancient Apologies, of *Justin Martyr*, *Me-  
 lito* and *Athenagoras*, were addressed to the Emperor and Se-  
 nate of *Rome*: notwithstanding which, their condition, gene-  
 rally speaking, continued much the same, through the follow-  
 ing ages, till they were established at last by the civil power:  
 during all which time, they were constantly insulted and ca-  
 lumniated by their Heathen Adversaries, as a *stupid, credulous,  
 impious sect; the scum of mankind, and the prey of crafty  
 Impostors*: calumnies, of which all the ancient Apologists

[1] Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui nunquam. ideo nescio, quid aut  
 quatenus aut puniri soleat, aut quæri— &c. Ep. l. x. 97.

*N. B. Pliny* says in this letter, that many of both sexes, and of all ages,  
 ranks or orders of men, had embraced Christianity. *Tertullian* also gives the  
 same account, about an hundred years later. [Apologet. 1. ad Scapul. vers.  
 fin.] but it must be observed, that their accounts were given from the Provinces  
 of *Bithynia* and *Africa*, where the dignity even of the most eminent was but  
 very little considered or respected in the great Republic of *Rome*.



complain, and take great pains to confute. *Tertullian* expostulates very warmly with the Heathen Magistrates, “ that  
 “ they would not give themselves the trouble, to make the  
 “ least inquiry into their manners and doctrines; but con-  
 “ demned them for the mere name, without examination  
 “ or trial; treating a Christian of course, as guilty of every  
 “ crime; *as an enemy of the Gods, Emperors, laws, customs,*  
 “ *and even of nature itself*—and what, says he, can be more  
 “ unjust than to hate, what you know nothing of, even  
 “ tho’ it deserved to be hated? ” [2] *Arnobius* and *Lactan-*  
*tius* make the same complaint near an hundred years later,  
 in the beginning of the fourth century, that they were derided  
 every where by the Gentiles, *as a senseless, stupid race of block-*  
*heads and brutes, to whose impieties, all the calamities, which*  
*afflicted the several countries, where they lived, were constantly*  
*imputed* [3].

[2] Christianum hominem, omnium Scelerum reum, Deorum, Imperatorum, legum, morum, naturæ totius inimicum existimas &c. *Apol.* §. 1, 2—  
 Ἐφ’ ἡμῶν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα ὡς ἔλεγχον λαμβάνετε. &c. vid. *Just. Mart. apol.* 1. p. 8.

[3] Nos hebetes, stolidi, obtusi pronuntiamur & bruti sed pestilentias, in-  
 quunt, & ficitates, bella, frugum inopiam—resque alias noxias—Dii nobis  
 important injuriis vestris, atque offensionibus exasperati—*Arnob.* l. 1. p. 2, 7.

Cur igitur pro stultis, vanis ineptis habemur? *Lact.* l. 4. c. 13. Illud quoque  
 ortum est vulgare proverbium; *pluvia deficit*, fit causa Christiani. *Aug. Civ.*  
*D.* l. 2. 3.

Si Tiberis ascendit ad moenia; si Nilus non ascendit in arva; si cœlum stetit;  
 terra movit; si fames; si lues; statim, Christianos ad Leonem. *Tertull.* *Apol.* 40.



In these circumstances, it cannot be imagined, that men of figure and fortunes would pay any attention to the Apologies or writings of a sect, so utterly despised: especially, when on the one hand, there was no elegance of stile or composition, to invite them to read; and on the other, all the discouragements, which the Government could give, to deter them from reading. Much less can we believe, that the Emperor and Senate of *Rome*, should take any notice of those Apologies, or even know indeed, that any such were addressed to them. For should the like case happen in our own days, that any Methodist, Moravian, or French Prophet, should publish an apology for his brethren, addressed to the King and the Parliament; is it not wholly improbable, that the Government would pay any regard to it, or take it at all into their consideration? How can it then be supposed, that the Emperor and Senate of *Rome*, who had a worse opinion of the ancient Christians, than we of our modern Fanatics, and instead of tolerating, were using all methods to destroy them, would give themselves the trouble to read, or to consider the merit of their writings?

We must add to all this, the great difficulty of publishing books, or of making them known to the world in those ages. The ease, which we now find in providing and dispersing, what number of copies we please, by the opportunity of the press, makes us apt to imagine, without considering the matter, that the publication of books was the same easy affair in all former times, as in the present.



sent. But the case was quite different. For when there were no books in the world, but what were written out by hand, with great labor and expence, the method of publishing them was necessarily very slow and the price very dear; so that the rich onely and curious would be disposed or able to purchase them; and to such also, it was often difficult to procure them, or to know even where they were to be bought.

In the Epistle of the Church of *Smyrna*, mentioned above, concerning the Martyrdom of *St. Polycarp*, there is a passage or two, which will help to confirm, what I am now asserting. For towards the end of it, the *Philadelphians*, to whom it is addressed, are desired, as soon as they have informed themselves of the contents, *to send it forward to all the other brethren*, who lived more remote, or beyond *Philadelphia*, that they also might read it and glorify God. The note likewise, which is annexed to the end of the Epistle, declares, “ that the copy of this most valued piece, which  
“ had been transcribed from the book of *Irenæus*, had lain  
“ buried and unknown at *Corinth* for several ages, almost  
“ destroyed by time, and in danger of being lost to the  
“ world, till it was discovered by a revelation from *Polycarp*  
“ himself, made to one *Pionius*,” from whose transcript, all the copies of it now extant are derived. [1] These passages, I say, plainly intimate, how difficult it must have been to the

[1] Μαθόντες ἑν ταῦτα, καὶ τοῖς ἐπέκεινα ἀδελφοῖς τὴν ἐπιστολὴν διαπέμψατε, ἵνα καὶ ἐκεῖνοι δοξάζωσι τὸν κύριον. § XX. it. XXIII; XXIV.



Christians of those days to provide such books as were wanted even for their own use, and much more to disperse such a number of them, as was sufficient for the information of the public.

Since this then was the condition of publishing books in those primitive ages, in which the Christians were neither able to bear the expence of copying, nor the Heathens disposed to buy them, there is great reason to believe, that their Apologies, how gravely soever addressed to Emperors and Senates, lay concealed and unknown to the public for many years, in a few private hands, and among the faithful only; especially, when the publication of them was not onely difficult and expensive, but so criminal also, as to expose them often to danger, and even to capital punishment; and when the books themselves, as oft as they were found by the magistrate, instead of being read, were generally ordered to be burnt. [1]

§. 3. It is urged against me, “ that no suspicion of craft  
“ can reasonably be entertained against persons of so exalted  
“ a piety, who exposed themselves to persecution and even

[1] Καίπερ θανάτῳ ὀρισθέντι καὶ τῶν διδασκόντων, ἢ ὅλως ὁμολογούντων τὸ ὄνομα τῷ Χριστῷ, ἡμεῖς πανταχῶς καὶ ἀσπαζόμεθα, καὶ διδάσκομεν. εἰ δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς ὡς ἐχθροὶ ἐνλεύξεσθε τοῖσδε τοῖς λόγοις, καὶ πλεονεξήσετε—τῷ φονεύειν. Just. M. Apol. 1. p. 69.

Nam nostra quidem scripta cur ignibus meruerunt dari? cur immaniter conventicula dirui? Arnol. l. 4. vers. fin.

“ to



“ to Martyrdom, in confirmation of the truth of what  
 “ they taught.” But this likewise will appear to have as little solidity in it as the former. For all, who, are conversant with history know; that nothing gives so invincible a prejudice, and so strong a bias to the mind of man, as religious zeal, in favor of every thing, that is thought useful to the object, which excites it. And the several facts, which I have already stated, will enable us to judge, in what manner the extraordinary zeal of those ancients may be presumed to have operated in the case now in question. I shall say nothing more therefore on that head: but since some of those Fathers, to whose testimony I have chiefly appealed, as *Papias, Justin, Irenæus, Cyprian, &c.* were not only persons of the greatest piety and zeal, but said to have been Martyrs also for the faith of Christ; it may be proper to add a reflection or two on the particular case of Martyrdom; in order to shew, that this venerable name made no real difference in the personal characters of men, nor ought to give any additional weight to the authority of a Christian witness.

There were various motives of different kinds, as Mr. *Dodwell* has shewn, which would naturally induce the primitive Christians, not only to endure, but even to wish and aspire to Martyrdom. He observes, “ that among the ancient  
 “ Jews, the *Galilæans* were remarkable for the obstinacy of  
 “ their temper and a contempt of death: whose example,  
 “ he imagines, might have some influence on those first  
 “ Christians, who drew their origin from that country,  
 “ and



“ and were constantly called *Galilæans*, and charged with  
 “ the same spirit of obstinacy by their adversaries [1].” A  
 character, which seems to be particularly verified in the Chri-  
 stians of *Palæstine*, concerning whom, *Tiberianus*, the Go-  
 vernor of *Syria*, sends the following account to the Empe-  
 ror *Trajan*.

“ I am quite tired with punishing and destroying the  
 “ *Galilæans*, or those of the sect called Christians, accord-  
 “ ing to your orders. Yet they never cease to profess volun-  
 “ tarily, what they are, and to offer themselves to death.  
 “ Wherefore I have labored by exhortations and threats, to  
 “ discourage them from daring to confess to me, that they are  
 “ of that Sect. Yet in spite of all persecution, they con-  
 “ tinue still to do it. Be pleased therefore to let me know,  
 “ what your Highness thinks proper to be done with  
 “ them [2].”

Glory also, or reputation was another great spur to Mar-  
 tyrdom: for by the principles of those ages, nothing was  
 esteemed more glorious, than the *crown of Martyrdom*, as it  
 was called. There was an anniversary festival instituted to  
 the honor of each Martyr: in which their memories were  
 celebrated by panegyrical orations, and a veneration, next to  
 divine, paid to their reliques. In their prisons, they were  
 visited by the Christians of all ranks; proud to minister to

[1] Poterat & Judæorum, præsertim *Galilæorum* obstinata illa indoles in pri-  
 morum Christianorum patientia locum habere. Dodw. Dissert. Cyprian. 12. 2.

[2] Vid. *Tiberian*. Epist. apud Coteler. Edit. Patr. Apostol. V. 2. p. 181.



them in the very lowest offices, and to kiss their chains: and if they happened to escape with life from their tortures, as they frequently did, their authority was ever after most highly respected; in the decision of all controversies; in absolving men from the ordinary discipline of the Church; in granting pardon to lapsed Christians; and restoring them to communion, on what terms they thought fit [1].

But the principal incentive to Martyrdom, was the assurance, not onely of an immortality of glory, and happiness in another world, in common with all other pious Christians,

[1] Quis in carcerem ad osculanda vincula Martyris reptare patietur? [Tertull. ad Uxor, 2. 4.] Quam pacem quidam in Ecclesia non habentes, a Martyribus in carcere exorare solebant. [Id. ad Martyr. 2.] [Vid. Dodw. Dissert. Cyprian. xi. 9, 10.]

Sacrificia pro eis semper, ut meministis, offerimus, quoties Martyrum passiones & dies anniversaria commemoratione celebramus. [Cypr. Ep. 34. it. 37.]

Mandant aliquid Martyres fieri? si justa, si licita, si non contra ipsum Dominum, a Dei Sacerdote facienda sunt. [Cypr. de Lapsis. p. 174.] Ut qui libellum a Martyribus acceperunt, & auxilio eorum adjuvari apud Dominum in delictis suis possunt—cum pace a Martyribus promissa ad Dominum remittantur. [Id. Ep. 13. & 12.]

N. B. Eusebius speaking of the persecution under *M. Aurelius* and *L. Verus*, says, “that those, who were then racked and tortured for the confession of their faith, were so humble, that they would not assume the title of Martyrs, nor suffer it to be given to them, declaring none to be worthy of that name, but those who were made perfect by suffering death; and praying, that they also might arrive at that perfection.” [Hist. Eccles. 5. 2.] But we find a contrary practice in *Cyprian*’s time, who freely gives the title of *Martyr* to all, who had indured torments for the faith of Christ. Which was so far from being rejected by them, that many, as he complains, were so puffed up with pride on that account, as to give great disturbance to the peace and discipline of the Church. Vid. Epist. x, xi, xii, xiii, &c.

but



but of extraordinary and distinguished rewards, and a degree of happiness, proportionable to the degree of their sufferings. For while the souls of ordinary Christians were to wait their doom in some intermediate state; or pass to their final bliss through a purgation by fire; it was a general belief, that the Martyrs were admitted *to the immediate fruition of Paradise, and that the fire of Martyrdom purged all their sins away at once* [1]. And the opinion likewise, which commonly prevailed in these days, that this world was near to it's end, made them the more eager still to snatch that crown, which would intitle them to such high privileges; give them a power with God, so as to procure benefits for others, and make

[1] Sed & justos cum judicaverit, etiam igni eos examinabit, &c. Lact. VII. 21.

Nemo peregrinatus a corpore, statim immoratur penes Dominum, nisi ex Martyrii prærogativa; paradiso scilicet, non inferis diversurus. Tertull. de Resurr. carn. 43.

Quis non—pati exoptat? ut Dei totam gratiam redimat; ut omnem veniam ab eo compensatione sanguinis sui expediat? omnia enim huic operi delicta donantur. Id. Apologet. ad fin.

*N. B. Cyprian*, speaking of the different state of the lapsed Christians, tho' restored afterwards to the Church by penance, and of the Martyrs, who had nobly suffered death or torments for the faith of Christ, says; it is one thing, to lie at mercy; another, to arrive at glory: one thing, to be thrown into prison, and not to be discharged, till you have paid the uttermost farthing; another, to receive the immediate reward of your faith and virtue: one thing, to be cleansed from your sins by a long course of torments, and a purgation by fire; another, to have all your sins wiped off at once by martyrdom: in a word, one thing, to hang in suspense about your doom, in the day of judgement; another, to be crowned directly by the Lord. Ep. 51. p. 71. ad fin.



them Assessors and Judges with Christ himself at the last day [1].

There was another notion, diligently inculcated and generally believed at the same time, which was sufficient of itself to efface all the terrors of Martyrdom, *viz.* that under all that dreadfull apparatus of racks and fires, and the seeming atrocity of their tortures, the Martyrs were miraculously freed from all sense of pain, nay felt nothing but transports of joy, from the cruelty of their tormentors. All which is expressly affirmed by many of the ecclesiastical writers.. *The visible assistance of heaven*, says Dr. Chapman, *relieving the pains of some, extinguishing them in others, and converting them into pleasure and rapture in many*——which facts, he declares, *to be so well known and so well attested; so plain and so indisputable, that there was no occasion for him to take the trouble of proving them* [2]. Socrates, the Historian, has furnished an instance of them in the case of one *Theodorus*: and the old Martyrologies, as they are published by the Romanists, and especially *the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, to which the Doctor refers us for the indisputable proof of true miracles, will supply us with many more [3]. This

*Theodorus*

[1] Αὐτοὶ τοίνυν οἱ θεοὶ μάγλυες παρ' ἡμῶν, οἱ νῦν τῷ χριστῷ πάρεδδοι, καὶ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτῷ κοινωνοὶ, καὶ μέτοχοι τῆς κρίσεως αὐτῷ. Euseb. Hist. l. 6. c. 42.

[2] Miscellan. Tracts, p. 156.

[3] As appears beyond all dispute from the acts of *Perpetua and Felicitas*, &c. Ibid. p. 169.



*Theodorus* was a young Christian, of eminent zeal and piety, who is said to have suffered the most cruel tortures by the

*N. B.* It is strange, that a Protestant Divine should lay so much stress on these Acts, as to make them the unquestionable vouchers of true miracles : which, while they excite our compassion for the sufferings, and our admiration of the courage of these two female Martyrs, yet shock and disgust us at the same time, to see all this virtue and fortitude derived, not from the calm and sober principles of the Gospel, but from the impetuosity of a wild and extravagant enthusiasm. Among many other instances of this, written by *Perpetua* herself, in her prison, she relates what follows. “ That, as she was praying  
“ with the rest of her fellow-martyrs, she happened to mention, all of a sudden, and to her own surprize, the name of *Dinocrates*, which had not  
“ come into her mind of a long time, till that very moment. It was the name of her brother, who died of a Cancer in his face, when he was but  
“ seven years old. This renewed her grief for his unhappy case; and convinced her, that she ought to pray for him, as being now held worthy to  
“ intercede for others : whereupon she began to put up her prayers and sighs for him to the Lord, and in that same night received this vision. She saw  
“ *Dinocrates* coming out of a dark place, in which there were many others with him, greatly tormented by heat and thirst ; with a fordid and pale countenance, and the same wound in his face, which he had when he died.  
“ There was a pool of water also in the place, but with a brink deeper than the Stature of the boy, who stretched himself out, as desirous to drink, but  
“ was not able to reach the water. This grieved *Perpetua*, who, as soon as she was awake, knew by this vision, that her brother was in an uneasy state :  
“ but being assured, that she could relieve him by her prayers, she continued to intercede day and night, with groans and tears, that his punishment  
“ might be remitted for her sake. Upon which, she shortly after received another vision, when the place, which before was dark, appeared bright and  
“ shining ; and *Dinocrates* was now quite clean, well dressed and refreshed ; and instead of the wound, with a Scar onely in his face : and the brink of  
“ the pool was reduced to the height onely of his navel, whence he instantly drew water : on the brink also stood a vial full of water, out of which he  
“ began to drink, yet the water in it never failed : so that the boy, having  
“ now



the command of the Emperor *Julian*; but after he was left for dead by his tormentors, was providentially preserved and restored

“ now satisfied his thirst, went away chearfully to play, as children usually do,  
 “ by which *Perpetua* understood, that her brother was removed from the place  
 “ of his punishment.”

The case of this infant *Dinocrates* was alledged by an ancient writer, in a controversy with St. *Austin*, as a proof, that baptism was not absolutely necessary to an admission into paradise: to which St. *Austin* answers, “ that tho’ the boy  
 “ was but seven years old, he might probably be baptized at that age, and  
 “ after baptism be guilty of lying or denying Christ; or in the time of persecu-  
 “ tion might be drawn perhaps by his impious Father, who was an Heathen,  
 “ into some act of Idolatry, for which he was doomed to a place of torments,  
 “ till his pardon was obtained by the prayers of his Sister, then going to die for  
 “ Christ.” [de Origin. anim. l. 1. c. x. and l. 3. c. 9.] From these and several other visions of the same kind, which are related in the same Acts, the Romanists draw what they take to be a demonstrative and experimental proof of every thing, which they teach with regard to the other world; *of an Hell, a Purgatory, a Limbus, or separate place of Infants, and another Limbus of the Ancient Fathers, with a Paradise for the immediate reception of Martyrs: and that the dead may be relieved also from their pains by the prayers of the living.* [Vid. Ruinart. Acta Martyr. de SS. Perpet. & Felic. § VII and VIII, & notas Holstenii & Possini.]

Such are the miracles, which Dr. *Chapman* affirms to be indisputably proved by the Acts of *Perpetua* and *Felicitas*; and such the doctrines, which are deduced from them: but tho’ neither the enthusiasm nor the Popery, with which they abound, could check his Protestant zeal from ascribing a divine authority to them, there is another circumstance still belonging to them, sufficient, one would think, to have destroyed their whole credit with an Advocate of primitive and orthodox Antiquity: for the original Collector and publisher of them appears to have been one of those Heretics and disciples of *Montanus*, who gave so much disturbance to the Church in the early ages. This is declared to be most certain by the learned *Valesius*, tho’ a Papist; and notwithstanding the pains, which Mr. *Ruinart*, the Editor of the Martyrologies, takes to confute that imputation, the truth of it seems to be unquestionable. *Valesius* indeed, like a  
 good



restored to life. “ *Ruffinus* happening to meet with him  
 “ many years after, took occasion to ask him, whether he  
 “ had been sensible of any very sharp pains under the  
 “ agony of his torture; to which he answered; that he  
 “ had felt but very little, and that a certain young person  
 “ stood by him all the time, wiping away the sweat, which  
 “ flowed from him, strengthening his mind, and filling

good Catholic, desires, that this circumstance may not detract, either from the authority of those Acts, or the veneration due to those holy Martyrs, and charges it as a piece of craft on the Montanists, that they made use of these visions, to support the credit of their own dreams. But when we reflect on the enthusiastic spirit of *Perpetua*, and with what a confidence she relates her wonderfull visions and intercourse with the Lord; and when we find her character and revelations mentioned with praise by *Tertullian*, then a *Montanist*, it is highly probable, that *Perpetua* also herself was tainted with the same Heresy; and that *St. Austin* consequently, as an eminent Critic has observed, was drawn by some false tradition concerning these Martyrs, to honor them as true Saints, when in reality, they were Heretics. [Vid. Ittig. Dissert. de Hæresiarch. Sect. 2. c. 13. § 28.]

From the same Acts we see likewise, as I have said, how these primitive Martyrs went out to meet their cruel deaths with a firm persuasion, that they should feel no pain from them. *Felicitas* was eight months gone with child, when their execution drew near, and being afraid, as her companions also were, that, on the account of her pregnancy, she should be left by them alone in the way to their common hope; they all put up their joint prayers to heaven, three days before they suffered, upon which she fell presently into labor, and was delivered of a female child: but in the time of delivery, when she expressed a sharp sense of the pains which she felt; one of the Servants of the prison said to her; *if you lament so much now; what will you do, when you are thrown to the beasts, which you despised, when you refused to sacrifice?* to which she answered; *I now feel, what I suffer; but then, another will be in me, who will feel for me, because I am to suffer for him.* Vid. Act. ibid. § xv.

“ him



“ him with delight rather than torment, during his continuance  
 “ on the rack [1].”

Lastly, we must add to these several motives, the scandal of flying from persecution, and the infamy, which attended the lapsed Christians; so as to make life hardly supportable to those, who through fear of the rack and a cruel death, had been tempted to deny their faith, or guilty of any compliance with the idolatry of their persecutors. All which topics, when displayed with art and eloquence by their ablest Teachers, were sufficient, to inflame the multitude to what pitch of zeal they pleased, so as to make them even provoke, and offer themselves forwardly to the most dreadful torments.

“ Who is there, says *Cyprian*, who would not strive with all  
 “ his might, to arrive at so great a glory; to be a friend of  
 “ God; enter into present joy with Christ; and after earthly  
 “ torments receive heavenly rewards? If it be glorious to  
 “ worldly soldiers, after conquering an enemy, to return  
 “ triumphant into their country, how much greater glory  
 “ is it, after having vanquished the Devil, to return tri-  
 “ umphant into paradise, whence *Adam* was expelled, and  
 “ there to erect trophies over that very enemy, who expelled  
 “ him? to accompany God, when he comes to take ven-  
 “ geance on his enemies; to be placed at his side, when  
 “ he sits in judgement; to be made coheirs with Christ;  
 “ equal with Angels; and together with *the Apostles, Pro-*  
 “ *phets, and Patriarchs*, to rejoice in the possession of an hea-

[1] Socrat. Hist. l. 3. c. 19. it. Sozom. l. 5. c. xx.



“venly Kingdom? These things you are to bear in your minds  
“and memories. What persecution can get the better of  
“such meditations? what torments be superior to them [1]?”

These principles and motives, I say, had such force, as sometimes to animate even bad men, to indure a Martyrdom. for the Heretics also had their Martyrs, as all history informs us, as well as the Orthodox; who yet in their common sufferings and death, continued to testify their mutual aversion, *and to refuse all communion with each other* [2]. But by bad men, who became Martyrs, I do not mean such onely, as were called Heretics, for that name was often given even to the best; but the proud, the contentious, the drunken, and the lewd, among the orthodox Martyrs themselves: of all which kinds, there were many, as *St. Cyprian* complains, who, after they had nobly sustained the trial of Martyrdom, and escaped with life from the torments of their persecutors, yet by a petulant, factious, and profligate behaviour, gave great scandal and disturbance to the discipline of the Church.

[1] Exhortat. ad Martyr. c. 12. This may serve as a specimen of that *true and noble and genuin eloquence of Cyprian*, which, as *Dr. Marshall*, the Translator of his works says, *resembles an impetuous torrent, which carries away with it every thing it meets; since he was capable of raising what passions he pleased, and of persuading us, to do whatever he had a mind to.* Pref. to his Translation. p. 17.

[2] Καὶ ἐπειδὴ οἱ ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς καλᾶ ἀλήθειαν πίστεως μαρτύριον κληθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τύχῃσι μελέτιων τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Φρυγῶν αἱρέσεως λεγομένων μαρτύρων, διαφέρουσι τὲ πρὸς αὐτὰς, καὶ μὴ κοινωνήσαντες αὐτοῖς τελειῦναι. Euseb. Hist. l. 5. c. 16. it. c. 18.



This is expressly declared by *Cyprian* in several of his letters: in one of which, addressed to the whole body of the Confessors, after he has signified his joy, “ that the greatest part  
 “ of them were made the better by the honor of their confession, and preserved their glory, by a quiet and inoffensive carriage, yet he had been informed, he says, of others, who infected their society, and disgraced the laudable name of Confessor by their evil conversation: some of them being drunken and lascivious, some puffed up and swollen with pride: while others, as he had heard with the utmost grief, defiled their bodies, the temples of God, sanctified by their confession, with the promiscuous and infamous use of lewd women [1].” In one of his letters also to the Clergy, he says, I am grieved, when I hear how some of them run about, wickedly and insolently, spending their time in trifles, or in sowing discord; and defiling the members of Christ, and which have already confessed Christ, by the unlawfull use of women [2].” And in another treatise, where he is touching the same subject, “ let no man wonder, says he, that some of the Confessors commit such horrible and grievous sins; for confession does not secure them from the snares and temptations of the Devil——otherwise we should never after see any

[1] Sed quosdam audio inficere numerum vestrum, & laudem præcipui nominis prava sua conversatione destruere, &c. Epist. 6.

[2] Doleo enim, quando audio quosdam improbe & insolenter discurrere, & ad ineptias vel discordias vacare: Christi membra & jam Christum confessa, per concubitus illicitos inquinare. Ep. 5. it. 7, 22, 24.



“ frauds, and whoredoms and adulteries in Confessors, which  
 “ I now groan and grieve to see in some of them [1]”.

It

[1] De Unitat. Eccles. vers. fin. p. 185.

N. B. The name of Martyr was given, as I have said above, to all those, who had suffered tortures for the public profession of their faith before the Magistrates. And the title of Confessor to those, who, after making the same profession, had been committed onely to prison, in order to be reserved to the same tortures, or punished with death. Whence *Tertullian* calls them, *Martyres designati*, or Martyrs elect. [ad Martyr. 1. vid. Cypr. Ep. 8. & Not. Rigalt. 8.]

But with regard to this case of Martyrdom, I cannot forbear observing a strange contrariety both of principle and practice in these primitive ages, between the times of *Polycarp* and *Tertullian*. The Martyrdom of *Polycarp*, in the narrative of it, written by the Church of *Smyrna*, is twice called an *Evangelical Martyrdom*, or performed according to the rules of the Gospel and in imitation of Christ: [§ 1, 19.] who did not offer himself forwardly to his enemies, but withdrew himself from them, and waited till he was betrayed into their hands: and commanded his Apostles also, *when they were persecuted in one City, to flee into another*. [Matt. x. 29.] When the persecution therefore grew hot in *Smyrna*, *Polycarp* withdrew himself from that City into the neighbouring Villages; shifting his quarters still from Village to Village, to avoid his pursuers, till he was betrayed by one of his own domestics; [§ 9.] and so fulfilled both the example and precept of our Lord. And upon the same authority also *Clemens* of *Alexandria* declares it to be a sin, and a kind of self-murder; not to flee on such an occasion from the malice of their persecutors. [Stro. l. 4. c. x.]

*Tertullian*, on the contrary, about half a century after, wrote a book against *all flight in persecution*, in which he labors to prove, “ that our Saviour’s precept was temporary, and peculiar to the circumstances of those times, and  
 “ addressed wholly to the Apostles; who yet afterwards, when those circumstances were changed, both practised and prescribed a different conduct.  
 “ That it was base in private Christians to fly, and much more in Bishops and  
 “ Pastors.—That a good Shepherd will lay down his life for his flock, but a bad  
 “ one fly at the sight of the wolf, and leave his sheep to be torn in pieces—



It is not my design, by what is said here on the subject of Martyrdom, to detract in any manner from the real merit and just praise of those primitive Martyrs, who with an invincible

“ [p. 97, 696.”] He inveighs also against another practice, which seems to have been common among the Christians of those days, *of ransoming themselves from their persecutors by a sum of money*; and declares it to be “ an affront  
“ to God to redeem those by money, whom Christ had redeemed with his  
“ blood: and to make secret bargains with an informer or soldier, or knavish  
“ President, for the life of a Christian (whom Christ had purchased and set  
“ free in the face of the world) as if it were for a thief. [p. 697, 698.] He  
“ exhorts them therefore to commit themselves intirely to God: who could ei-  
“ ther throw them into the midst of their enemies, while they were flying, or  
“ cover them from danger even in the midst of the people: and he shews by  
“ an eminent example, that neither flight nor money was effectual to pro-  
“ cure their safety. *Rutilius*, says he, a most holy Martyr, after he had oft  
“ escaped by flying from place to place, and redeemed himself, as he imagin-  
“ ed, from all danger by his money, yet in all this security, was unexpectedly  
“ apprehended, carried before the President, and put to a severe torture, for  
“ the correction, I believe, of his flight: and being committed at last to the  
“ flames, he then ascribed the Martyrdom, which he had been avoiding, to  
“ the mercy of God: and what else did the Lord intend to teach us by  
“ this example, but that we ought not to fly from persecution? [p. 93.]

These were the principles, which generally prevailed in the Church from the time of *Tertullian*: so that when two of the most eminent Bishops, who succeeded him, *St. Cyprian of Carthage*, and *St. Dionysius of Alexandria*, found it expedient in a time of persecution, to preserve their lives by retiring from their several Sees, they had no other excuse to recur to, but the plea of a divine revelation, and the express command of God for it: the precept and example of our Saviour; the practice of his Apostles; and *the Evangelical Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, being no longer of any force, against the Enthusiastic zeal, and visionary temper of that age. Which zeal however, because it happened to be ridiculed by an infidel writer, is strenuously defended by *Dr. Chapman*, in the very words and reasoning of *Tertullian*. See *Miscell. Tracts*, p. 157.

constancy,



constancy, sustained the cause of Christ, at the expence of their lives. It is reasonable to believe, that, generally speaking, they were the best sort of Christians, distinguished by their exemplary zeal and piety; and the chief ornaments of the Church in their several ages: yet it is certain, that they were subject still to the same passions, prejudices, and errors, which were common to all the other pious Christians of the same age. My sole view therefore is, to expose the vanity of those extravagant honors, and that idolatrous worship, which are paid to them indiscriminately by the Church of *Rome*; and to shew especially, that the circumstance of their Martyrdom, while it gives the strongest proof of the sincerity of their faith and trust in the promises of the Gospel, adds nothing to the character of their knowledge or their sagacity; nor consequently, any weight to their testimony, in preference to that of any other just and devout Christian whatsoever [1].

§ 4.

[1] *Savonarola*, a most pious and learned Monk of the fifteenth century, preached with great force and eloquence in *Italy*, against the corruptions of the Court of *Rome*, and the flagitious life and practices of *Pope Alexander* the sixth, who not being able to silence him, condemned him to be hanged: of whom *Dr. Jer. Taylor* tells the following story.

“ Two *Franciscan Friars*, says he, offered themselves to the fire, to prove  
 “ *Savonarola* to be an Heretic. But a certain *Jacobin* offered himself to the  
 “ fire, to prove, that *Savonarola* had true revelations, and was no Heretic. In  
 “ the mean time, *Savonarola* preached, but made no such confident offer, nor  
 “ durst he venture at that new kind of *fire ordeal*, and put the case, that all  
 “ four had passed through the fire, and died in the flames: what would that  
 “ have proved? Had he been a Heretic, or no Heretic, the more or the



§. 4. It has been frequently objected by my Antagonists, that to reject the unanimous testimony of the Fathers, in their reports of the primitive miracles, will destroy the faith and credit of all history.

This was the constant cant of all the zealots, even of the Heathen world, whenever any of their established superstitions were attacked by men of sense. “If these things, they  
“cried, approved by the wisdom of our ancestors, and confirmed by the consent of ages, can be shewn at last to be  
“false, we must burn all our annals, and believe nothing  
“at all [1]”. And the same outcry, as *Eusebius* tells us, was made by them also against the Christians, when the Gospel

“less, for the confidence of these zealous Idiots? If we mark it, a great many  
“arguments, on which many Sects rely, are no better probation than this.  
“Lib. of Proph. Ep. Dedic. p. 39.

There is another story likewise, somewhat applicable to the present purpose, which I have elsewhere made use of, as it is told by Sir *Tho. Roe*; “that  
“the house and Church of the Jesuits in *India* happening to be burnt, the  
“Crucifix was found untouched, which was given out as a miracle. Upon  
“this, the King sent for the Jesuit, and having examined him about the fact,  
“made this proposal to him, *that if he would cast the Crucifix into the fire before*  
“*his face, and it did not burn, he would turn Christian.* The Jesuit would not  
“venture the credit of his religion on so hazardous an experiment, yet offered to  
“cast himself into the fire as a proof of his own faith, which the King would not  
“allow.” For he had sense enough to know the difference, between the effect of a miracle and a martyrdom; that the last could prove nothing but the Jesuit’s sincerity, in what he professed to believe; whereas the first would yield the strongest confirmation to the truth also of what he taught. [See Lett. from *Rome*. Prefat. Disc. p. 100.]

[1] *Negemus omnia; comburamus annales; ficta hæc esse dicamus, &c.*  
*Cic. de Divin. l. 1. 17.*

first



first began to spread itself among them: “ that to reject a  
“ belief and worship universally established by Kings, Legisla-  
“ tors, and Philosophers of all nations, whether *Greeks*, or *Bar-*  
“ *barians*, was an impious apostacy from the rites of their an-  
“ cestors, and a contradiction to the sense and judgement of  
“ mankind [1].” The Christians on the other hand constantly  
derided this plea, and declared, “ that to follow the inventions  
“ of their ancestors without any judgement or examinations,  
“ and to be led perpetually by others, like brute animals,  
“ was to preclude themselves from that search of wisdom and  
“ knowledge, which is natural to man [2]. Yet when it  
came at last to their own turn, to find the authority of ages  
on their side, they took up the same plea, which they had  
before rejected; and urge it at this day, as the principal ob-  
jection to Protestantism; “ that it is a *mere novelty*, which  
“ had no existence in the world before *Luther*, contradictory  
“ to the practice of all the primitive Saints and Martyrs of  
“ the Catholic Church, and to the unanimous consent of  
“ fifteen centuries.”

If this objection therefore had ever been found to have any  
force in it, the ancient Christians could never have overruled  
the impostures of Paganism; nor our Reformers, the super-  
stitions of Popery. But in truth, when it comes to be se-  
riously considered, it will appear to have no sense at all in it:

[1] Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. l. i. c. 2.

[2] Quare cum sapere, id est, sapientiam quærere, omnibus sit innatum;  
sapientiam sibi adimunt, qui sine ullo judicio inventa majorum probant, & ab  
aliis, pecudum more, ducuntur, &c. Lactant. Divin. Instit. l. 2. c. 8.



and if the Doctors *Chapman* and *Berriman*, who now revive and so zealously urge it, were called upon to explain themselves upon it, they would find it difficult, I dare say, to tell us what they mean by it. If they mean, that a contempt of those miracles, which they would persuade us to believe, would necessarily derive the same contempt on History itself; all experience has shewn the contrary: for tho' there have been doubters and contemners of such miracles in all ages, yet history has maintained it's ground through them all. During the three first centuries, the whole world in a manner not onely doubted, but rejected the miracles of the primitive Christians: yet history was written and read with the same pleasure and profit as before, and applied by the unbelievers themselves to the confirmation of their very doubts. Our commerce with the times past, as they are represented to us in history, is of much the same kind, with our manner of dealing with the present. We find many men in the world, whose fidelity we have just ground to suspect; yet a number of others, whom we can readily trust, sufficient to support that credit and mutual confidence, by which the business of life is carried on: just so in ancient History; we find many things, of which we have cause to doubt; many, which we are obliged to reject; yet it's use still subsists and from real and indisputable facts, supplies sufficient matter both of instruction and entertainment to every judicious reader.

If our Doctors therefore mean any thing by the objection, which we are examining, it must be this; that the same principles,



ciple, which induces us to suspect the primitive miracles and particularly those of *Simeon Stylites*, when so forcibly and credibly attested, must induce us also, if we are consistent with ourselves, to suspect every thing, that is delivered to us from ancient history. But they widely mistake the matter; and do not at all reflect on what I have intimated above, that the history of miracles is of a kind totally different, from that of common events, the one, to be suspected always of course, without the strongest evidence to confirm it; the other, to be admitted of course, without as strong reason to suspect it. Ordinary facts, related by a credible person, furnish no cause of doubting from the nature of the thing: but if they be strange and extraordinary; doubts naturally arise, and in proportion as they approach towards the marvellous, those doubts still increase and grow stronger: for mere honesty will not warrant them; we require other qualities in the Historian; a degree of knowledge, experience, and discernment, sufficient to judge of the whole nature and circumstances of the case: and if any of these be wanting, we necessarily suspend our belief. A weak man indeed, if honest, may attest common events, as credibly as the wisest; yet can hardly make any report, that is credible, of such as are miraculous; because a suspicion will always occur, that his weakness, and imperfect knowledge of the extent of human art, had been imposed upon by the craft of cunning Jugglers. On the other hand, should a man of known abilities and judgement relate to us things miraculous, or undertake to perform them himself, the very notion



of his skill, without an assurance also of his integrity, would excite onely the greater suspicion of him [1]; especially, if he had any interest to promote, or any favorite opinion to recommend, by the authority of such works: because a pretension to miracles, has, in all ages and nations, been found the most effectual instrument of Impostors, towards deluding the multitude, and gaining their ends upon them.

There is not a single Historian of Antiquity, whether Greek or Latin, who has not recorded *Oracles, prodigies, prophecies and miracles*, on the occasion of some memorable events, or revolutions of States and Kingdoms. Many of these are attested in the gravest manner and by the gravest writers, and were firmly believed at the time by the populace: yet it is certain, that there is not one of them, which we can reasonably take to be genuin: not one, but what was either wholly forged or from the opportunity of some unusual circumstance attending it, improved and aggravated into something supernatural. This was undoubtedly the case of all the Heathen miracles; and though it may hurt in some measure the general credit of miracles, yet, as experience has plainly shewn, it has not in any degree affected the credit of common history. For example, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* is esteemed one of the most faithfull and accurate Historians of Antiquity: we take his word without scruple, and preferably even to the Roman writers, in his account of the civil affairs of *Rome*; yet we

[1] Quo quis versutior & callidior est, hoc invisior & suspectior, detracta opinione probitatis. Bic. Off. 2. ix.



laugh at the fictitious miracles, which he has interspersed in it. “ In the war with the *Latins*, he tells us, how  
 “ the Gods, *Castor and Pollux*, appeared visibly on white  
 “ horses, and fought on the side of *the Romans*, who by their  
 “ assistance gained a complete victory ; and that for a perpe-  
 “ tual memorial of it, a Temple was publicly erected, and a  
 “ yearly festival, sacrifice and procession instituted to the ho-  
 “ nor of those Deities [1].” Now tho’ no body at this day, believes a tittle of the miracle, yet the faith of History is not hurt by it. We admit the battel and the victory ; and take the miraculous part to be, what it certainly was, the fiction of the Commanders or persons interested ; contrived for the sake of some private, as well as public benefit, which the nature of the case will easily suggest.

Thus in the narrative also, above mentioned, of the Martyrdom of *St. Polycarp*, the point of history is, that he was condemned to death at *Smyrna*, of which he was Bishop, and there actually burnt at the Stake, for his profession of the

[1] Vid. Dionys. Hal. Antiqu. l. 6. p. 337 Edit. Oxon.

N. B. A late Historian of our own Kingdom, in his description of the battel of *Worcester*, between *Charles II.* and *Oliver Cromwell*, has delivered a story to posterity, concerning a certain contract made in form, between *Oliver and the Devil*, in a personal conference. Which story was so strongly attested, that he thought himself obliged to insert it, as I heard him say, by the advice of some learned Friends. But the faith of history would rest on a very slippery bottom, could it be shaken in any degree by our contempt of so silly a tale : which tho’ no man of a sound judgement can think credible, yet none will conceive the least doubt on that account, about the reality of the battel or the other circumstances of it, as they are related by the same Historian. See Echard’s Hist. of Engl.



Christian faith. We have no doubt therefore of his Martyrdom, yet may reasonably pause at the miracles, which are said to have attended it. The voice pretended to come from heaven, was heard only by a few; and that in a time of such hurry, in which nothing could be heard distinctly. If such a voice therefore had been uttered by any one in the croud, as it was hardly possible to discern whence it came, so those whose zeal and imagination were particularly affected by so moving an occasion, might easily mistake it for miraculous. The flame also is said to have made an arch around his body, and could not burn it: an appearance, which might easily happen from the common effects of the wind, or something at least so like it as to afford matter enough to a superstitious fancy, to supply the rest. But the circumstance of a *Dove flying out of his body, when pierced by a sword*, is beyond all belief: or if a *Dove* was really seen to fly out of the wood, which was prepared to consume him, it might have been conveyed thither, probably by design, in order to be let loose at a certain moment: as in the funerals of the Roman Emperors, an Eagle was always observed to fly out of the funeral pile, as soon as it began to blaze, which was supposed to convey the soul of the deceased into heaven: of which a solemn deposition was constantly made upon oath, in order to the Deification of those Emperors [1].

But

[1] Ἀέλος δὲ τις ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀφθεῖς ἀνίπτατο, ὡς καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῆς εἰς τὸν ἔρανον ἀναφέρειν. Dio. de Fun. August. l. 56. p. 598.



But the case of witchcraft affords the most effectual proof of the truth of what I am advancing, There is not in all history any one miraculous fact, so authentically attested as the existence of witches. All Christian nations whatsoever have consented in the belief of them and provided capital laws against them: in consequence of which, many hundreds of both Sexes have suffered a cruel death. In our own country, great numbers have been condemned to die, at different times, after a public trial, by the most eminent Judges of the Kingdom: and in some places, for a perpetual memorial of their diabolical practices, anniversary sermons and solemnities have been piously instituted, and subsist at this day, to propagate a detestation of them to all posterity [1]. Now to deny the reality

Γενομένης δὲ τῆς, αἰός τις ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀνίπλωτο. καὶ ὁ μὲν Περίναξ ἔως ἠθανάλισθη. Id. de Fun. Pertinac. l. 74. p. 842.

Καὶ τί γὰρ τὴν ἀποθήσκουσαν παρ' ὑμῶν αὐτοκράτορας αἰὲ ἀπαθαναλίζεσθαι ἀξιῶντες, καὶ ὁμνύοντα τινα προάγει ἐωρακέναι· ἐκ τῆς πυρᾶς ἀνερχόμενον εἰς τὸν ἔραν τὸν καλακαένια Καίσαρα. Just. Martyr. Apol. 1. p. 32. Ed. Thirlb.

[1] In the beginning of Queen *Elizabeth's* reign, the Court seems to have been greatly alarmed by an imaginary increase of this Infernal Art, and the horrible mischiefs, which it was then actually perpetrating in the Kingdom; and which were loudly proclaimed from the Pulpit, by many of the celebrated Preachers. Among the rest, it is surprizing to perceive, to what a length of superstition and credulity the great Bishop *Jewel* was carried on this occasion, by his prejudices and prepossession in favor of this popular delusion: a Prelate as venerable for his piety, learning and judgement, as any, in the earliest ages of the Church: who, in a Sermon preached before the Queen, taking occasion to touch upon this subject, addresses himself to Her in the following words;  
“ it



reality of Facts so solemnly attested, and so universally believed, seems to give the lie to the sense and experience of all Christendom ;

“ it may please your Grace to understand, that this kind of People, I mean  
 “ witches and forcerers, within these few years are marvelously increased with-  
 “ in your Grace’s realm. These eyes have seen most evident and manifest  
 “ marks of their wickedness. Your Grace’s Subjects pine away, even unto  
 “ death ; their colour fadeth ; their flesh rotteth : their speech is benumbed ;  
 “ their senses bereft. Wherefore your poor Subject’s humble petition to your  
 “ Highness is, that the laws touching such Malefactors may be put in due exe-  
 “ cution. For the shoal of them is great, their doings horrible, their malice  
 “ intolerable, their examples most miserable : and I pray God, they never practise  
 “ farther than upon the subject.” Upon which passage Mr. *Strype* remarks,  
 that the remonstrances of this kind made by this Bishop and others gave oc-  
 casion, *to bring a Bill into the next Parliament, for making Inchantments and*  
*witchcraft Felony.* See annals at the Reformat. vol. 1. p. 8.

When *Tertullian*, in proof of the miraculous powers, which were claimed by the Christians of that age, challenges the Heathen Magistrates, to come and see how easily the Christian *Exorcists* could drive Devils out of the bodies of men, he might be assured probably at the same time, that the notice of his challenge would never reach those Magistrates, or at least, that they would never pay any regard to it : yet pluming himself, as it were, upon it he adds ; *and what can be more manifest than this operation, what more convincing than this proof?* [Apolog. c. 23.] But I would ask the warmest advocates of the primitive miracles, whether this *convincing proof of Tertullian*, or the express testimony of any other Father, or any number of them can in any manner be compared with that strength of evidence, which, through all ages, affirmed the existence of witches and their direfull practices, by the most solemn acts of Kings and Parliaments and whole nations ; who, after many public trials and the strictest examinations, have constantly attested the reality of the facts and crimes, with which they were charged, of inflicting horrible pains and diseases, and destroying the lives of many innocent People, by the force of their charms and sorceries. See the printed trials of *nineteen witches*, ten of whom were condemned



Christendom; to the wisest and best of every nation, to public monuments subsisting to our own times: yet the incredibility of the thing prevailed and was found at last too strong for all this force of human testimony: so that the belief of witches is now utterly extinct, and quietly buried without involving history in it's ruin, or leaving even the least disgrace or censure upon it.

There is another instance also, within our own times, more directly applicable to our present purpose. I mean the pretended miracles of the late Abbé de Paris, which made such a noise in France a few years ago, and are still believed by a great part of that Kingdom, or by all perhaps, who believe any other miracles of that Church. This Abbé was a zealous *Jansenist*, and warm opposer of that Bull or Constitution of *Pope Clemens XI.* called *Unigenitus*, by which all the doctrines of his sect were expressly condemned. He died in 1725, and was buried in the Church-yard of *St. Medard* in *Paris*; whither the great reputation of his sanctity drew many People to visit his tomb, and pay their devotions to him, as to a Saint: and this concourse gradually increasing made him soon be considered, as a subject, proper to revive the credit of that party, now utterly depressed by the power of the Jesuits, supported by the authority of the Court. With-

demned together at *Lancaster*, 1612, where the Judge, in passing sentence of death upon them, speaks of *many cruel and barbarous murders*, of which they had been found guilty, besides other crimes, of tormenting the bodies and destroying the cattle of their neighbours.



in six years therefore after his death the confident report of miracles, wrought at his tomb, began to alarm not onely the City of *Paris*, but the whole nation: while infinite crouds were perpetually pressing to the place, and proclaiming the benefits received from the Saint: nor could all the power of the Government give a check to the rapidity of this superstition, till by inclosing the tomb within a wall, they effectually obstructed all access to it [1].

This expedient, tho' it put an end to the external worship of the Saint, could not shake the credit of his miracles: distinct accounts of which were carefully drawn up, and dispersed among the people, with an attestation of them much more strong and authentic, than what has ever been alledged for the miracles of any other age, since the days of the Apostles. *Monsr. de Montgeron*, a person of eminent rank in *Paris*, [2] published a select number of them, in a pompous volume in quarto, which he dedicated to the King and presented to him in Person; being induced to the publication of them, as he declares, by the incontestable evidence of the facts; by which he himself, from a libertin and professed Deist, became a sincere convert to the Christian faith. But besides the collection of *Mr. de Montgeron*, several other collections were made, containing in the whole above an hundred miracles,

[1] This step gave occasion to the following Epigram, which was fixed upon the inclosure, in the stile of the Royal Edicts.

De par le Roy. Defense a Dieu  
De faire miracles, en ce lieu.

[2] Conseiller au Parlement de Paris.

which



which are all published together in three volumes, with their original vouchers, certificates, affidavits, and letters annexed to each of them at full length.

The greatest part of these miracles were employed in the cures of desperate diseases, in their last and deplored state, and after all human remedies had for many years been tried upon them in vain: but the Patients no sooner addressed themselves to the tomb of this Saint, than the most inveterate cases, and complications of Palsies, Apoplexies and Dropsies, and even blindness and lameness &c. were either instantly cured, or greatly relieved, and within a short time after wholly removed. All which cures were performed in the Church-yard of *St. Medard*, in the open view of the people, and with so general a belief of the finger of God in them, that many *Infidels*, *Debauche's*, *Schismatics*, and *Heretics* are said to have been converted by them to the Catholic faith. And the reality of them is attested by some of the principal Physicians and Surgeons in France, as well as the Clergy of the first dignity; several of whom were eye-witnesses of them, who presented a verbal proces of each to the Archbishops, with a petition signed by above twenty *Curès* or Rectors of the Parishes of *Paris*, desiring that they might be authentically registred, and solemnly published to the people, as true miracles.

I have seen an answer to these miracles by a Protestant writer, *Mr. Des Voeux*; who does not deny the facts, but the miraculous nature of them onely, which by many reasons



he endeavours to render suspected. Yet another writer on the same side, declares, that all his reasons are too weak, to do them any hurt; and that there is no other way of shaking their credit, than by shewing them to be the works of the Devil. Which he undertakes to prove, in three letters to the said *Mr. Des Voeux*, to be the genuin character of them.

Let our Declamers then on the authority of the Fathers, and the faith of history, produce if they can, any evidence of the primitive miracles, half so strong, as what is alleged for the miracles of the *Abbe de Paris*: or if they cannot do it, let them give us a reason, why we must receive the one, and reject the other: or if they fail likewise in this, let them be so ingenuous at last as to confess, that we have no other part left, but either to admit them all, or reject them all; for otherwise, they can never be thought to act consistently. And if, from their avowed principles and blind deference to authority, we may guess at their real sentiments in the present case, they will be as little scrupulous about the modern, as the ancient miracles of the Church, but patiently admit them all; as being more agreeable to that rule, which is prescribed by their primitive Guides; “that the true disciples of Christ, *have nothing more to do with curiosity or inquiry, but when they are once become believers, their sole business is to believe on.*” [1]

[1] Nobis curiositate non opus est post Jesum Christum, nec inquisitione post Evangelium. cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere. Tertull. de Præscript. Hæret. §. 8.



Again, The celebrated Historian, *Mr. de Vertot*, whose *revolutions of Rome, of Sweden and of Portugal*, afford so much entertainment to the public, has written a defence also of a certain miracle, which is imagined to do some honor to the Church and Kingdom of France: I mean the miracle of *the sacred vial*, or *sainte Ampoule*, as it is called, with which their Kings are anointed at their coronation. [1]

This Vial is said to have been brought from heaven by a Dove, for the baptismal unction of *Clovis*, the first Christian King of France, and dropped into the hands of *St. Remigius*, then Bishop of *Rheims*, about the end of the fifth century: where it has been preserved ever since for the purpose of anointing all succeeding Kings. [2] and its divine descent is said to be confirmed by this miracle; that as soon as the coronation is over,

[1] The Abbè de Vertot begins his Dissertation on this vial, in the following manner.

“ There has scarce ever been a more sensible and illustrious mark of the visible protection of God, over the Monarchy of France, than the celebrated miracle of the sacred vial. On the day of Great *Clovis*’s baptism, heaven declared itself in favor of that Prince and his successors, in a particular manner; and by way of preference to all the other Sovereigns of Christendom. So that we may justly apply to every one of our Kings, on the day of their coronation, the words of the Royal Prophet.” *God, even thy God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows.* Dissertat. au sujet de la sainte Ampoule.—Dans les Memoires De l’Acad. des Inscript. & bell Lett. Tom. 2. p. 665.

[2] ————— Idem primus & omnes

Post ipsum Reges, Francorum ad sceptrum vocati,

Quando coronantur, oleo sacrantur eodem.—ib. p. 674.



*the oil in the Vial begins to waſt and vaniſh, but is conſtantly renewed of itſelf, for the ſervice of each new Coronation. [1]*

The *Abbe de Vertot* defends the truth of this miracle by the authority of ſeveral witneſſes, who lived at the time of *Remigius* or near to it; and of many later writers alſo, who give teſtimony to the ſame, through each ſucceeding age. Yet a learned Profeſſor at *Utrecht*, in a diſſertation upon this ſubject, treats it as a mere forgery, or pious fraud, contrived to ſupport the dignity of the *Kings and Clergy of France*; and ranks it in the ſame claſs with the *Palladium of Troy*; the *Ancilia of old Rome*; and the *Croſs, which Conſtantin pretended to ſee in the heavens*; and the reſt of thoſe political fictions, which we meet with in the hiſtories of all ages. [2]

Now what will our Advocates of the primeve miracles ſay to this? Will they tell us here, as they have often done on ſimilar occaſions, that by rejecting the authority of *Mr. Vertot* and his witneſſes in this ſtory, we deſtroy the faith of all his other ſtories, and can no longer take his word for any thing, which he has related of *Rome*, or *Sweden*, or *Portugal*? Let them talk at this ſilly rate, as long as they pleaſe, men of ſenſe

[1]

—————cujus prece rorem  
Miſit in ampullam cœleſtem Rector Olympi;  
Corpus ut hoc lavacro Regis deberet inungi,  
Deficeretque liquor, ibi corpore Regis inuncto.

Nic. de Braia. De S. Remigio.

[2] Vid. Everard Ottonis. J. C. Diſſertat. &c. §. iv. p. 365. De Unctione Remenſi. Traject. ad Rhen. quarto. 1723.

Trojani *Palladium*.—Virgilius *lapſa Ancilia cœlo*—veneratur. Conſtantine, *ἵττερας ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ* in cœlo legiſſe fertur, &c. vid. ibid.

will



will always know, how to distinguish in such cases; how to extract all the instruction, which is offered to them, in one part of his writings; yet guard themselves from all the superstition, which is inculcated in the other. They know, that, on subjects of common history, a writer of sense and credit can hardly have any other motive of writing, but to please and instruct; and to illustrate the truth of facts, as far as he was able, by the perspicuity of his stile, and the proper disposition of his materials: but on subjects of a miraculous kind, they know likewise, how forcibly the prejudices of education, a superstitious turn of mind, the interests of a party, or the views of ambition are apt to operate on a defender of those miracles, which the government and religion of his country are engaged to support.

These few instances are sufficient to evince the reasonableness and prudence of suspending our assent to reports of a miraculous kind, tho' attested by an authority, which might safely be trusted, in the report of ordinary events. They teach us also how opinions, wholly absurd and contrary to nature, may gain credit and establishment through ages and nations, which, by the force of education, custom, and example, have once contracted a superstitious and credulous turn; till being checked from time to time by the gradual improvements of science, and the successive efforts of reason, inquiring occasionally into the uncertain grounds, and reflecting on the certain mischiefs of them, they have fallen at last into such utter contempt, as to make us wonder, how it was possible for them, ever to have obtained any credit.



But whatever be the uncertainty of ancient History, there is one thing at least, which we may certainly learn from it; that human nature has always been the same; agitated by the same appetites and passions, and liable to the same excesses and abuses of them, in all ages and countries of the world; so that our experience of what passes in the present age, will be the best comment, on what is delivered to us concerning the past. To apply it then to the case before us: there is hardly a single fact, which I have charged upon the primitive times, but what we still see performed, in one or other of the Sects of Christians, of our own times. Among some we see *diseases cured; Devils cast out, and all the other miracles*, which are said to have been wrought in the primitive Church: among others, we see the boasted gifts of *Tertullian's* and *Cyprian's* days; *pretended revelations, prophetic visions, and divine impressions*: now all these modern pretensions we readily ascribe to their true cause; to the artifices and craft of a few, playing upon the credulity, the superstition, and the enthusiasm of the many, for the sake of some private interest: when we read therefore, that the same things were performed by the ancients, and for the same ends, of acquiring a superiority of credit, or wealth, or power, over their fellow creatures; how can we possibly hesitate, to impute them to the same cause, of fraud and imposture?

In a word; to submit our belief implicitly and indifferently, to the mere force of authority, in all cases, whether miraculous or natural, without any rule of discerning the credible from the incredible, might support indeed the  
faith,



faith, as it is called, but would certainly destroy the use of all history ; by leading us into perpetual errors, and possessing our minds with invincible prejudices, and false notions both of men and things. But to distinguish between things, totally different from each other ; between miracle and nature ; the extraordinary acts of God, and the ordinary transactions of man ; to suspend our belief of the one, while, on the same testimony, we grant it freely to the other ; and to require a different degree of evidence for each, in proportion to the different degrees of their credibility ; is so far from hurting the credit of history, or of any thing else, which we ought to believe, that it is the only way to purge history from its dross, and render it beneficial to us ; and by a right use of our reason and judgement, to raise our minds above the low prejudices, and childish superstitions of the credulous vulgar.

There cannot be a stronger proof of the stupid credulity and superstition of those primitive ages, into which we have been inquiring, and of the facility of imposing any fictions upon them, which their leaders thought fit to inculcate, than what is related by St. *Austin*, from the report, as he says, of *credible persons*, “ that at *Ephesus*, where St. *John*, the Apostle, lay buried, he was “ not believed to be dead, but to be sleeping onely in the grave, which he had “ provided for himself, till our Lord’s second coming : in proof of which, they “ affirmed, that the earth, under which he lay, was seen to heave up and down “ perpetually, in conformity to the motion of his body, in the act of breathing.” Which ridiculous conceit was grounded on those words spoken by our Lord of that Apostle, *if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* Whence the other disciples inferred, *that St. John should not die.* [Jo. 21. 23.] vid. Augustin, in loc. Oper. T. 3. p. 819, 820.

But



But we have another instance, in our own country, of a credulity not less extravagant, than what is just mentioned, in the case of a person believed to be possessed by the Devil; an account of which was printed and published with the following title. “*The Surey Demoniack. Or an account of Satan’s strange*  
 “*and dreadfull Actings, in and about the body of Richard Dugdale, of Surey*  
 “*near Whalley in Lancashire. And how he was dispossessed by God’s blessing*  
 “*on the Fastings and Prayers of divers Ministers and people. The matter of*  
 “*fact attested by the oaths of several credible persons, before some of his Ma-*  
 “*jefty’s Justices of the peace in the said County. London 1697.*”—These dreadfull actings of *Satan* continued above a year: during which, there was a desperate struggle between him, and nine Ministers of the Gospel, who had undertaken to cast him out; and for that purpose, successively relieved each other in their dayly combats with him: while *Satan*, as in the days of *Tertullian*, tried all his arts to baffle their attempts; insulting them with scoffs and raillery; puzzling them sometimes, with Latin and Greek, and threatening them with the effects of his vengeance; till he was finally vanquished and put to flight by the persevering prayers and fastings of the said Ministers: the truth of which fact is more substantially attested, than any case of the same kind, in all the primitive ages. *Mons. de Fontenelle*, a writer justly celebrated for his admirable parts and learning, speaking of the origin and progress of these popular superstitions, says,  
 “Give me but half a dozen persons, whom I can persuade, that it is not the  
 “sun, which makes our day light, and I should not despair of drawing whole  
 “nations to embrace the same belief. For how ridiculous soever the opinion  
 “be, let it be supported onely for a certain time, and the business is done:  
 “for when it once becomes ancient, it is sufficiently proved.”—Hist. des oracles. c. xi.



# THE INDEX.

*N. B.* Præf. stands for Præface, Intr. for Introductory Discourse, Post. for Postscript, N. for Note, the Numerals refer to the Præface and Introduction, and the Figures to the Work.

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